



Poetry

Competition

Teens & Adults

Shortlist & Winners 2025



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Teens Shortlist & Winners

(aged 13-17)

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Teens Shortlist & Winners

(aged 13-17)



The Greatest Treasure

by Dylan McGregor

The people lie in agitation,
As the seekers travel far,
News of the investigation,
The one thought they cannot bar.

At heralds cry they leap to their feet,
At the thought to watch again,
So they take off to the streets,
The lucky finder 's everyone's friend.

They march towards the house of the mindless,
A plethora of lazy smiles,
People flow with joy and kindness,
For word the time was spent worthwhile.

The crowd begins to bloom and blossom,
Dance and sing,
launch fireworks,
The pain before they have forgotten.
The they no longer care for there irks

The masses charge to the land of eyes square,
Before them the one with final vote,
"Where?" Asks the great lord on the chair,
And the lucky finder presents the lost remote

Adults Shortlist & Winners

(aged 18+)

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Adults Shortlist & Winners

(aged 18+)

1

I Came Early upon the Morning

by Moira Hansen

I came early upon the morning while pieces of night remained,
hanging like torn clouds caught in the tops of trees,
and whispering over the surface of the river,
and creeping on tiptoe along the ground,
reflecting every last drop of dark night moonlight,
that none of it be wasted;

while the sun yet yawned and clung to bed,
before sending silent fingers to touch the leaves awake,
to scratch the frost along the fences,
to trace each blade of silvered grass
and setting all to sparkle.
Before all this.

A blackbird perched on a small branch,
on a thin line, on a painted crack against the stretching sky,
in the chill air all laced with ice,
threw back his head to greet the morning
and launched upon it such tones of celebration
that my own heart leapt within me.

I watched as he, a tiny Pavarotti, filled the air with notes
that dipped and soared across the space between us.
To sing so! To throw aside all caution and remember only joy!
Even before the sun melted the tissuey remains of the night,
even before the day was properly begun,
to celebrate afresh the coming of it.

2 **Aotearoa** by Chrissy McCawe

Let's raise a waiata to skies so wide,
Where maunga wear the cloud with pride.
Where awa twist through hills so green,
And every view feels rich, tapu, and seen

Aotearoa sings in wind and tree,
In waves that dance across the moana free.
Each sunrise glows with golden hue,
As rākau stretch through morning dew.

The pīwakawaka flits with flair,
A flick of tail through forest air.
She twirls like kapa haka grace,
A cheeky guide through leafy space.

The proud kererū swoops with might,
Wings beating slow like soft twilight.
Draped in shapes of bush and wine,
He guards the ngahere, calm, divine.

The tūī, cloaked in midnight hue,
With kōwhai nectar shining through,
Sings waiata both bold and rare –
A voice that tangos through the air.
In the dark, where silence grows,

The kiwi in the shadow goes.
A taonga of the night she stays,
Where stars peer down through flaxleaf haze.
The whenua speaks in every breeze,
Across the snow, between the trees.

From southern fiords to sandy bays,
The whenua lives in endless ways.
The whakapapa of stone and fire,
Still fuels the land's deep, fierce desire.

And in the plains where grasses hum,
You hear the tūpuna's beating drum.
So raise your voice, stand tall with pride,
For Aotearoa, far and wide.

A land of birds, of stars, of song,
Where tangata whenua still belong.
From Te-Ika-a-Māui to southern shore,
We sing of whenua, loved and pure.

A gift, a home, a sacred place
New Zealand's heart, our warm embrace.

Glossary:

waiata – song

maunga – mountain

awa – river

moana – ocean

rākau – tree

pīwakawaka – fantail

ngahere – forest

tūi – native bird

taonga – treasure

whenua – land

whakapapa – genealogy, lineage

tupuna – ancestors

tangata whenua – people of the land

Te-Ika-a-Māui – the North Island

3 **Soul Bared** by Clara Haines

Forever is a sacred thing
But I see it when I look at them

A frost borne kiss
In a silver night
Threads of the universe bound tight

Tangible things,
Rituals of power
Soft words,
Stolen hours

You were a choice
And I'd make it again

Soul bared, to you alone
Trust in together
Guides me home

Connection

by Keara Symmans

Slowing down

Dripping in time

Rose tinted colours

Deep aching laughter

Setting history in motion

One drop blends into an ocean

Bagpipes travel on the silk of my ancestors

I feel their presence as they stand behind

They call to me through spirited twine

I have inherited their pride

I blow out the candles

And there they are

With me again

And always

Beauty in a Graveyard

by Jane Mair

Muddy layers now mark your bed
Hard stone shapes sit at your head
Gold white letters shout out loud
Words of love forever proud.

Love and loss, dark and light
Hand in hand, our human fight
To ease the pain is oh so hard
Trapped within this headstoned yard.

But beauty calls for us to see
What nature heals and lets us be.
Sit at peace within this place
Celebrate earth's heavenly space.

Hills like woolly mammoths lie
Lacy branches spike the sky
Rivers sprinkle while tui sing
Winter wonders what spring might bring.

Trees thicken, panga unfurl
Soft grass stems round fingers curl.
Muted chat caresses ears
Human connection across the years.

When hearts stop beating and lay to rest
Sit awhile in Nature's chest.
Read the words in white and gold
Celebrate your loved one's enduring hold.

Death might try but doesn't dare
To break the bonds of human care.
Let's celebrate that and not forget
Love's last word in hearts is set.

Celebrate My Firsts

by John Dwyer

The first time I found I had learnt to read,
Was a change to my life that I did need,
To be able to do something on my own,
Gave me a joy to many still so unknown,

Reading the whole book just with myself,
Triumphing silently reading to my oneself,
Going to that world alone exploring more,
Never wanting an interruption at my door,

Earning pocket money to be able to buy,
A book I wanted set me on a real high,
My own library on my self made bookcase,
After that so many more books I did chase,

Learning to ride a bicycle all on my own,
Gifted a bike to keep at my very home,
My mother teaching me to repair the bike,
So I didn't interrupt her, much to my delight,

My first lesson unexpected on mowing a lawn,
Led me to mow many from getting up at dawn,
Fixing a bike for money a job I took up at home,
Started the after school business all on my own,

Thank you Dad for my first bike workshop in your shed,
Unknowingly it led to a forty seven year career instead,
Of repairing things as a A Grade mechanic that did lead,
All first passing eight years of mechanical exams indeed,

My first Cambridge University Commercial practise exam,
Flourished me more than missing my School C twice, damn,
Eighty percent in the Cambridge exam saved my job it did,
When starting my first career job now grown up from a kid,

Lots of firsts when starting to drive, first car, first real journey made,
First holiday with my car, many first places discovered, plans laid,
Marriage, children, grandchildren, great grand children coming alive,
Watching all of these firsts and watching every time they each arrive,

Birthdays we celebrate of ages that keep always constantly ever increasing,
Celebrate it today, tomorrow historical, lets get it done before we're ceasing.

You're the One in Charge

by Toni Dines

I was feeling fairly gloomy,
A life without direction.
A need for something deeper,
I was bored, upon reflection.

An advert for a chorus,
Popped on my screen one day;
Barbershop for beginners,
that sounds fun, I say.

It takes all I've got to get there,
My insides spin and churn.
But force myself I must,
And the next week I did return.

First rehearsal was quite scary,
Some logic, skills and supper.
Who knew 4-part harmony,
Could cause my heart to flutter.

6 weeks later we reach our goal,
It's the end of course performance!
We've learn a song and made some friends,
That's of main importance.

And now I'm hooked, they got me good,
I've finally found my people.
A harmonic female family,
I'm stuck to them like treacle.

Winners in New Zealand,
And contest in the USA,
It seems we're rather good,
Though we're far too modest to say!

Here's to the future,
Whatever that may be,
Consider singing, for your mental health,
It certainly worked for me.

Celebrate life's goals,
The little and the large.
Learn something new, test yourself,
You're the one in charge.

Above

by Kat Joseph

My Grandmother is one hundred and two
For her one hundredth birthday she danced a jig on a table
While my Uncle hovered nervously behind her
Ready to catch
There was no fear on her face only glee in her eyes
As we clapped and sang and she kicked her heels in triumph
My cousin lifted her baby up on her shoulders amongst us
Tiny fists raised high
Four generations held in one sacrosanct moment
Great grandchild bouncing in the air
And Granny right up there with her
Both above our heads
Both beyond our imaginings
Eye to eye and lifetimes between
Joy incarnate

The First

by Wiremu Tuhiwai

We all remember our first love

The first time of when, of this or of that
I would do this, and you would say that
Overthinking and romanticising of it
Heart-sinking with pop harmonising hit
Howling for attention, we both wanted more
With puppy love just as confused as before
We made love the way we should
We made way so that love could
I kissed the way she made me kiss
She would curse the way I cursed
Your touch and words with rewarding lips
Your moves and heart with rhythm like hips
Words were immature, just like an infant
A whimper, a beat, yet remained dormant
Filled with moments and intrusions
Our story here with our different versions
Spent & battling for a different end
Pent-up prattling, we would always send
As you read, I wish my words were better
As I read, I wish your words weren't heavier
The times I remembered and you didn't
Or the times you stayed, and I wouldn't
I look back together as we smile with divine
At your eyes, and you laughing with mine
Seeking perfection was never that clear
Our imperfections have landed us here
I knew this act and how it would end
Ending bittersweetly with 'let's be friends'
The skin-on-skin and heart-to-heart
Of course, these two would eventually part

Because saying nothing about something is worse
There is always something to be said about your first
The first time it didn't hurt was the last time
The last time it wouldn't hurt was about time

We all remember our last love

A New Beginning

by Neil Pates

The joy of life begins anew,
In love's embrace, a dream comes true.
A whispered hope, a quiet prayer,
A tiny spark now growing there.

The secret stirs in gentle grace,
A journey starts in time and space.
With plans to dream and paths to chart,
The future beating in each heart.

Each day brings change, a slow unfold,
A story new, a promise told.
Then comes a sign, a fluttered beat,
A rhythm strong, a sound so sweet.

With every scan, a glimpse inside,
The mystery no longer hides.
Will it be pink or will it be blue?
Either way, love's light shines through.

The months drift by, both fast and slow,
Excitement starts to brightly glow.
The eve arrives with breath held tight,
A mix of fear and pure delight.

Now comes the time, as many know,
To bring new life with strength and glow.
A final push, a hopeful plea,
Then cries of life in jubilee.

Tiny fingers, tiny toes,
A precious face in soft repose.
Eyes wide open, looking around,
Cradled in love so profound.

Held close with gentle hands,
Wrapped in love that understands.
A miracle both loud and mild,
Mum and Dad now hold their child.

Time to celebrate, the news is spread
"All are well," the message is read.
And in that room, joy fills the air,
A family born in love and care.

A Celebration of Life

Russell Chamany

From the first breath drawn in the morning light
To our final resting place at night,
Every instant holds a spark divine—
A celebration of life's celestial design.

We concede a newborn's hungry cry,
That bawls beneath the starlit sky.
As sunrise breaks with colors bright,
The baby awakens, having claimed its right.

We embrace the toddler's fall—
A scraped knee rises and conquers all.
Each wobbly step, a victory won, |
Every smile outshines the sun.

In adolescent rebellion, we find fire—
Dreams that lift the spirit higher.
As hearts race in insanity,
Who cares for so-called virginity?

We dance through love's first tender kiss,
Butterflies in their youthful bliss.
With every glance that shift your fate,
And time itself agrees to wait.

In working years we build and strive,
Through sweat and joy, we come alive.
Planting seeds for what we're making,
Trying to give more than we're taking.

We work to keep the bond secure,
Holding on to friendships that endure.
The ones who stay when storms arise—
Will be our comfort through all our sighs.

We see our future in children's eyes,
Teaching them how to reach the skies.
Passing wisdom, passing love,
The truths we've learned and risen above.

In silver years, we are slow to see
The beauty in human complexity.
Quiet sunsets just for us—
We pray for world peace, rather than curse.

And when the final chapter nears,
Look back with no regret or fears,
For every breath was ours to claim,
Each moment in life's sacred game.

So let's celebrate from start to finish,
With joy and cheer that won't diminish.
Let laughter rise and spirits shine,
Together we toast through sparkling time.

Loving Home

Victoria Buchanan

You asked
"Hey babe, ya want anything from the dairy?"
And I said
"I'm not sure"

Because what my heart pulled for,
What I really needed
Was this:

The pink and dark grey-blue of the sun,
Melting over the pencil-edged Tararua Ranges.

Sinking

Burnt red, and soft mandarin smudges on the north-bound wet road

Flashing diamond specks, whirling from my wind-screen wipers and smashing on asphalt, smeared along the bottoms of gutters.

Egg-shell blue awa, finally free from the confines of its nursery – spotted trails of foam obscuring her bed

Orange leaves, whirling on their way to the ground, their bodies crackling delightfully beneath my feet.

But the immeasurable vastness of the night sky

The impossibility of you, me, and this

might be fixed

by a crunchie bar.

Weekend Celebration

Abra Sandi King

I am not a power dresser, I wear black
differently from corporate women
or prostitutes. Early in career

my mentor called me a beauty.
He feared the patients
would see too much. He advised

I blend into the workplace
distance my female
body from the male psyche.

He prescribed for me
black dowdy trousers, cloistered
bosoms, a dark-sky blouse.

I am detached, so far removed
my clients see only a Clinician
they do not know the nature

of this woman. On weekends
I drive my Triumph Spitfire
top down, clothe myself

in sunflowers, strelitzia, tiger lilies
dinnerplate dahlias, red hot pokers
magnolia blooms in everlasting season.



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