

# 'Siuko' Writing Project

*with Cumberland High School's Writer in Residence  
and Renowned Australian Author Dr. Bernard Cohen*

**MONDAY 31 JULY 2017**

# Introduction



Ginko is a Japanese term used to describe a walk in nature to inspire poetry and creative writing.

During Term 2, students from Carlingford West Public School, Cumberland High School and James Ruse Agricultural High School joined renowned Australian author Dr. Bernard Cohen on a Ginko observational workshop through Hunts Creek Reserve. Students were encouraged to walk mindfully and pause to create awareness, paying attention to what was around them without the distractions of traffic, noise and electronics.

Students then attended a second workshop with Dr. Cohen to help develop and refine the students' observations into creative writing pieces. Each student's final piece of writing was judged based on originality and creativity, clarity of language, structural balance and creative use of the observational walk.

Finalists from each of the three schools have had their compositions printed in this publication. Congratulations to these finalists!





# Cumberland High School

Cumberland High School is a dynamic learning community that has at its core a strong sense of belonging and the pursuit of excellence.

The vibrant and positive learning culture at our school enables students to emerge empowered and resilient individuals, equipped with life effectiveness skills and able to contribute positively as citizens of the 21st century.

At Cumberland High School, we maintain a whole-school focus on innovative teaching practices and the achievement of personal best through our core values Respect, Responsibility and Excellence.

As an all-inclusive learning community, we believe in the provision of collaborative leadership that supports professional learning and a diverse curriculum with an emphasis on student and staff leadership, strong partnerships and ongoing personal growth.

**Ms. Mechel Pikoulas** - *Principal*





# Forest Wonders

**By Marcel Lister**  
*Year 7 Red*

As I walked to the ingress of Hunts Creek,  
I saw the shadow of a rosella's beak,  
Flying with grace, as I watched in awe,  
It flew over the hills, and clutched its claws.

I entered the forest - in admiration I stood.  
Tall trees with hefty, hefty, red wood,  
While the sun was shining so vibrantly,  
I explored the forest intently.  
I saw pale green vines, as if woven on a loom,  
And the magenta flowers starting to bloom.  
The cumquats started to perish from the lush amber trees  
And as they fell they rolled straight to me with ease.

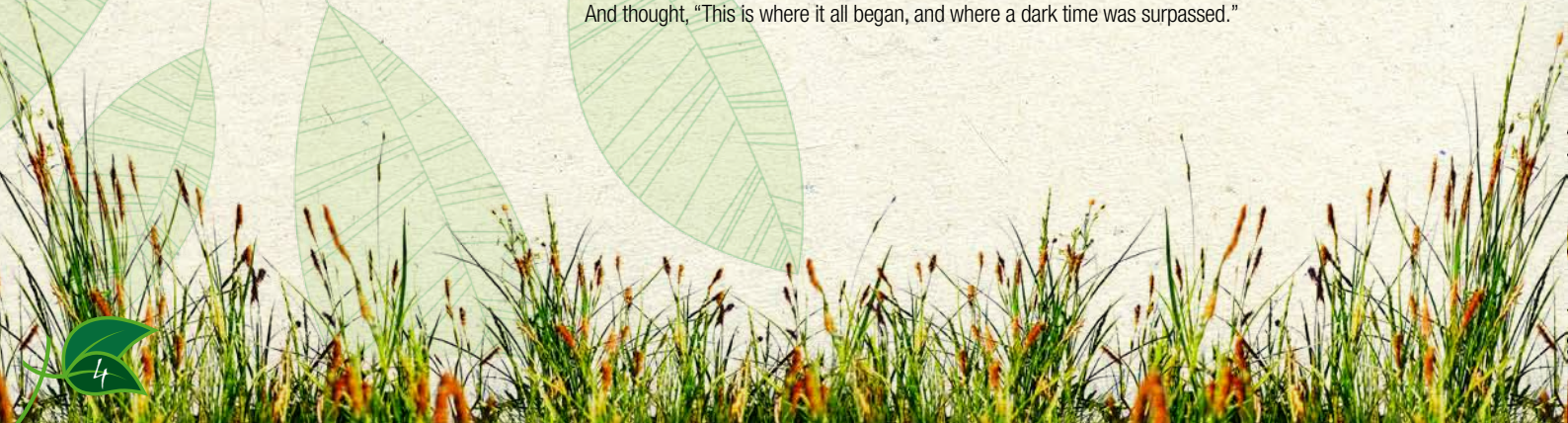
But over the hills, I heard sounds of rushing water,  
And I saw broken trees, as if they were slaughtered.  
I found myself upon a bridge, over a sharp steep gorge,  
As I imagined what this was like, before it was reforged:

A black and white forest with dying grey trees,  
And wildlife, finding shelter with no ease.  
But then along came a waterfall, full of hope and happiness,  
And became a place of undenied liveliness.  
The dark days were over; the dark days were gone,  
The forest was happy, the environment lived on.

I stepped away from the bridge, admiring the forest's physique,  
When a cacophony of birds, squawked over the hill's peak.  
Those birds flew off into the sunset, as free as one could be,  
And then I thought, "Oh, how I wish one of those birds was me!"

I strolled through the forest joyfully, seeing nature at its best,  
When once more I heard the flowing water, my heart pounding through my chest.  
I ran through the stringy vines, bounding from place to place,  
When there it was, I saw it, the waterfall of grace.  
It was a beautiful site, with the water's voice singing,  
Water flowed from rock to rock- brightly glistening,  
And the warm orange sun, throwing sunlight at my face,  
The magical, musical rhythms embraced the entire space.

I climbed to the top of the waterfall, on the mossy green grass,  
And thought, "This is where it all began, and where a dark time was surpassed."



# Urban Forest

**By Ethan Har**

*Year 7 Red*

I embark on my journey with some trepidation  
But soon my senses feel an inundation,  
From the natural beauty of paperbark trees  
To the soft green hues of eucalyptus leaves.


Ferns and shrubs strain for their share of blue sky  
As the golden light coaxes them to reach high,  
Green leaves flicker in the breeze  
As the crisp air dances with ease.

The fragrance of sodden timber fills the air  
Where the path leads, I do not care -  
Chirps and twitters are heard in the distance  
As feathered mates call, "Come here this instance!"

Brown, gnarled roots protrude from the ground  
As minute workers leave their orange mound,  
Moss spreads and flourishes amongst the rocks  
As the water trickles between the miniature locks.

Ferns shelter where scaly creatures crawl  
Near and amongst the honey-coloured waterfall -  
Who would have thought such a plain path,  
Would lead me to a world away from the everyday?





# The Boy Who Claimed The Light From The Dark

By Pamela Koutoulas

Year 7 Orange

Clouds fill the day like water shapes a glass and the sun never rises nor does it fall. Light never travels through the day making the land frosty, cold enough to numb the tips of your fingers. The wind howls at the naked trees that tower over the land - making an icy breeze from the empty and frail branches.

Each tree rusts like metal - all with hollow cores bringing nothing but sorrow across the snowbound land that'll never feel the colour and life of a flower or plant again. The creek freezes over and doesn't have a droplet of water to offer and the animals leave their home in lachrymose knowing that the beautiful days will never return. Never again will the sun bring the day from heaven or will the wind whistle a breeze to the billowing green trees nor will the aroma of jasmine and rose stick to the atmosphere. The ground will never bring feelings of delight and lust across the land, the creek won't ever flow willingly and the chime of the bird's song won't ever travel from ear to ear. The pure forest is gone.

The day overlaps night bringing a new day into the broken forest. The trees move to the wind's rhythms and the sky is polished with a thick grey dust - something is not right. Though the scenery of the forest is normal, a human boy is close to the forest and this is definitely not normal.

From metres away you can hear him get closer as his footsteps echo through the forest banging like church bells sending panic signals to the rest of the area, a human soul has never been close to the boundaries of the forest, so what is someone doing here?

He enters the forest. Terror rushes in the forest like a shooting star, the wind screams and the trees collapse with devils; the icy creek reflects the cloudy dark sky pegging tears down from above. As he gets deeper in we see a boy.

The boy runs through the forest as fast as lightning while his strawberry blonde hair trails behind him. He looks up at the foggy sky with ocean eyes and smiles with white teeth shining upon the land as he welcomes himself with an open mind and heart into the world of forest.

He pushes the brakes on his legs. Huffing and puffing like a steam train he says, "I got away from them." He is holding onto a loaf of bread over his dirty cloths despite him looking absurd he still glows in the stone-cold forest like a firefly in the dark, he doesn't belong.

"You're not a very welcoming forest! To think - that after risking my life - after stealing this loaf of bread - I'd expect to have a better welcoming - after all I'm clearly tired!!!" He laughs and then smiles. The forest is calm. Making himself at home, he sits on a fallen tree while he practically inhales the stolen bread.

The sun sets for the first time in a while. It breaks free from the jail bars of the clouds and opens a path for the moon to enter. The boy lays flat on the ground sinking into the snow - his eyes open wide like treasure chests filled with wonder as he looks up at the crescent moon which sparkles with light. The boy is consumed by the beauty that surrounds him.

He is woken up by the wind's song - a miracle must have happened because the forest is not the same. He clenches his fists and feels the slight tickle of grass between his thumb and index finger. His long eyelashes curl up into his eyelids while he looks up at the sky - he can't believe the sudden transformation in the forest.

The small, faded clouds are surfing through the ocean blue sky, the sun seeping through the big trees that are clothed in green. The birds are chirping their own records again and again and the squirrels are jumping from branch to branch while the bears hunt for fish in the free-flowing creek that was once covered in ice. The land is covered in flowers that imprint a rainbow on the ground with each flower giving off a sweet scent. The forest is alive again.

"Magic?" the boy says with a mouth full of laughter. The forest may be restored but the boy's stomach has definitely not. It is growling like an angry dog begging for food.

"Well I better be off, I'll come again someday..." The wind follows him back to where he came from and the forest is ready to salute him but as soon as he steps out, "There he is! Aspen - the one who stole the bread!!!"

Two fierce-looking men - both with differently shaved beards and both with cold eyes stand outside the forest.

"Well, seems as though you've caught me," says Aspen with no fight in him at all. They pull out their arms and hold him up and take him into their custody. Aspen turns his head back at the forest and sadly says his goodbye.

After that day, Aspen never returns to the forest. Over the days, weeks, months and years that follow, the light that once broke through the clouds has vanished and the sun never transforms into the moon. The land once again is in a deep winter; the creek is frozen like a snow cone and snow covers the land. The wind shaves the trees and the flowers die without the sun's warmth. The animals that had once returned have disappeared again. The wondrous magic that Aspen brought to the land is gone....

# Perspectives

By Joshua Abraham  
Year 7 Red

## Locked

Constrained.  
As if I'm in a small cage.  
Grounded.  
My wings yet to be spread out.  
Stiff.  
Freedom gone.

Dreaded humans.  
Drained the life out of my home.  
I look up to the skies where I used to roam free.  
In place, I now see groups of electrical lines -  
Upon my home, where the once lush leaves and cheerful trees,  
Have now become darkened and downcast.

## Giants

A land engulfed by the giants of green.  
These fingers stretch out into the atmosphere.  
However, normal these fingers are not.  
These fingers keep growing just like humans do  
Elevating themselves towards the heavens.

On the length of these fingers lives a community -  
A community of green people,  
Light, like a balloon.  
In the breeze they rustle,  
But in the storm, they don't fly away -  
For their hearts are connected to that of the giant.



# Bush Scattering

By Georgia Ryan  
Year 7 Orange

Sunlight streaked through thick tree trunks,  
Sunlight sparkled on the fallen dew,  
Sunlight glistened on lacy spider webs,  
Sunlight scattered – no pattern at all.

Trees wound along a narrow path,  
Trees rustled in the gentle breeze,  
Trees reached for the morning sky,  
Trees scattered – no pattern at all.

Birds soared in the fresh morning air,  
Birds called in a choir of song,  
Birds nestled in the tree tops high,  
Birds scattered – no pattern at all.

Boulders rested on the river bed,  
Boulders reflected on the water's edge,  
Boulders stacked on the muddy wall,  
Boulders scattered – no pattern at all.

Water fell through layers of rock,  
Water trickled into a muddy pool,  
Water hid in a secret lake,  
Water scattered – no pattern at all.



# Treasure

**Sarah Taylor**  
Year 7 Orange

There is a story told of two young travellers, students from the bright city of Cumberland. It was said that they went in search of a great treasure, magical and powerful beyond imagination. Something that would grant them a wondrous future and true happiness. Here is the tale...

They had heard of the treasure from Mistress Isachsen, a kind but mysterious woman that came to teach at the great school in Cumberland in the winter. While they drank hot chocolate, and warmed their feet in front of the fire in the school's large hall, Mistress Isachsen would tell them stories she had heard in her travels. One such all-consuming tale gripped two students, Sarah and Anna, so strongly that no matter how much the old woman tried to persuade them, the two girls decided to leave school and to go in search of the magical treasure that the story described. Over the long winter they dreamed of the treasure and concocted their plans.

Spring came around and the girls set off in excitement, quickly making their way to the edge of the forest next to the Pennant River where their teacher had said they must begin their search.

*'Where the great river meets the deep wood, there the path will be concealed.'* One of the school's library books had provided them with a map of the area and soon they found their way to a faint dirt track running alongside the river, overgrown by the thick grass and hidden between tall trees at the edge of a forest. The path led into the silent forest and the dim light between them made it hard to see where this track would take them...

The girls looked at each other and smiled. "Gotcha. Let's go find that treasure!" Sarah shouted. They started walking beneath the trees, the path barely visible at times. They talked as they walked, pointing out the occasional bird or strange looking plant. They saw that the trees were sometimes almost alive with creatures crawling over them, eating them away and burrowing inside them. Neither had been to that point, where the river ran before and there was so much to see and learn. Soon they were deep inside the forest and somehow the path seemed to become wider and clearer.

"That's better," Sarah said, "I was starting to think we'd just walked down an old goat track!"

"You're the only old goat around here!" Anna laughed, giving Sarah a gentle push. "I'll show you old goat!" Sarah yelled and jumped towards Anna. Anna started running down the path with Sarah giggling as she chased her. Just as Sarah was about to catch up she heard a noise in the distance. A strange gurgling, roaring sound. "Anna wait, listen!" Sarah yelled out.

Anna skidded to a stop and turned her head to listen. Her eyes widened and she looked at Sarah in excitement. "It's a waterfall! Mistress Isachsen said that we have to go past *'where the river drops'*. I thought she meant 'stops' but this must be right. We must be close."

The girls quickly made their way towards the sound. The gurgling became crashing and the roar became deafening until finally the trees parted and they saw a huge waterfall before them - the water throwing itself off a cliff above them and smashing into the river below. It was so loud they had to yell at each other.

"What's the next clue?" Sarah shouted, holding her hands to her ears. *"The old man cries, his tears falling through his long green beard. He hides the treasure and holds it near."* Anna replied, scratching her head in confusion and looking around. "I don't see any old man."

"I do! Over there!" Sarah cried and started running towards the bank of the river next to the slippery base of the waterfall. "Wait for me!" Anna yelled and took off after her.

At the base of the waterfall where the cliff started to rise, some rocks about three metres high had been shaped by the water to resemble a very rough looking face. Underneath the face vines and plants dropped down and made it look like the face had a long beard.

"That must be it. The old man's tears are the waterdrops from the waterfall and the plants are his beard. That means the treasure has to be here somewhere." Anna said, looking around.

"Wait! I have an idea." Sarah said softly, stepping towards the rocks and reaching out for the plant beard. She slowly pushed her hand into the vines and more and more of her hand disappeared, followed by her arm up to the shoulder. She looked back at Anna, totally thrilled. "There's a space back there. A secret chamber!"

She turned back and walked forward, brushing the vines away. Anna quickly followed and they found themselves in a dark cave with only a glimpse of light coming through behind them. The light was not enough though for them to see the treasure that they had been searching for.

Resting on top of a stalagmite in the centre of the cave was a small wooden box. The cover of the box was carved with magical symbols. Sarah took a deep breath and slowly lifted the lid to reveal.... A piece of elegant, thin folded parchment.

The girls looked at each other in confusion. "That's not treasure!" Sarah sulked. Anna reached out and took the parchment, unfolding it and holding it up so they could both read the words.

*'The real treasure lies in the adventure of learning. Maybe if you come back to school I'll share it with you.'*





# Carlingford West Public School

Carlingford West Public School provides quality learning programs in a caring, supportive and challenging learning environment. Special emphasis is placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills from Kindergarten to Year 6. Carlingford West excels in identifying and enriching students to maximize learning opportunities. Programs are tailored to the individual learning style of your child. Our school is a place where students are encouraged to explore their individual talents and to achieve their personal best.

Students are encouraged to become self disciplined, caring and responsible citizens in our multicultural society and to use their "You Can Do It!" keys to success – confidence, resilience, persistence, organization and getting along.

Carlingford West Public School is committed to and nurtures, cultural and linguistic diversity.

**Mr Andrew Williamson** - *Principal*





# Hope

By Olivia Kim

Year 5

Rain had fallen the night before, drenching the trees and soddening the ground, filling the forest with deep earthen smells. From the lofty canopies above, vibrant and emerald green, translucent in the pallid morning light, to the damp ochre leaves that masked the forest floor, Maddie could feel the ebb and flow of life. Precious. Reinvigorated.

Her bag quivered at her back as she climbed over a fallen log, feeling the texture of coarse, moss-eaten bark beneath her fingertips. Maddie giggled involuntarily as she felt a tickling jab in her spine, and she said, laughingly: *"We're not there yet."*

She was a sweet, caring, blissful young girl of ten years, with hair as brown as the crisp leaves that fell during autumn. Her eyes were compassionate, laughing, full of love as she gazed over the landscape that stretched out before her; uneven swells of mossy rock and great ancient trees. But her expression softened into sadness as she reached out and touched one, feeling the blackened, scorched scars that they still bore. She knew that, if she looked carefully, if she truly studied the scenery with her trained eyes, that she would be able to detect the tell-tale traces and clues of that one horrific night.

Not that she needed any of these clues. That one summer night was burned in her mind, forever imprinted in her memory, a fevered nightmare of infernal blight. The authorities never did find out how the fire had started, although a misplaced cigarette butt was ruled as the most likely perpetrator. She had woken to choking thick black smoke, the distant wails of sirens, and her father shaking her frantically, telling her to get up. The night was dry and opportune, perfect sustenance for the greedy flames that tore through the bushland around their home. They managed to escape before the dark smoke completely obstructed their exit.

Red was all she saw during that night. Red sky. Red flames. Red fire-fighters. Red vehicles. Red. Crimson red. Luckily, their home was not claimed by the fire that night, due to her father's clever decision to backburn the bushland around their house the month before. But Maddie knew that the same could not be said for the inhabitants within the forest. Terrified, wailing, desperate for clean air, desperate for refuge from the incessant heat. She knew that there had been no salvation for them. And so, she wept, her tears staining the baked ashen earth.

Maddie deftly jumped over a series of rough-hewn rocks that acted as stepping stones across a bubbling creek. The current that ran through it was cool and sparkling, the sustenance for countless creatures, both great and small. Maddie smiled once more. It was here that she had found him.

Her father had forbidden her from entering the forest for an entire week following the blaze, fearing for her safety. But, seeing her sorrowful face as she returned from school every day softened his heart, and one Saturday, he allowed her to go, under his care and supervision. But he was reluctant, for he knew that such an experience would only hurt her more.

Maddie remembered that autumn day as well. Indeed, her heart had plummeted further than she had ever known, as she was confronted with a landscape charred with destruction. Her heart, already in a million pieces, shattered into a million more as she walked down the well-worn pathway that no longer offered visions of lush vivacity, but of death.

Her father, seeing his precious daughter's distraught face, was about to turn her around, when they both heard it. A soft, mewling cry. They stopped in their tracks, shared a look of disbelief, their ears perked attentively. There! There it was again! Over and beyond the scorched log! Over there! Over there at the creek! Each cry brought them closer and closer to the source of the noise.

It was impossible, and yet, here it was. Tiny, emaciated, weakly lapping at the few puddles of water that had not been evaporated in the blaze, a baby koala, all alone. And yet, such a wretched sight filled Maddie with such compassion and empathy, and she knew what she had to do. And so it was in the skeletal remains of that forest, that both father and daughter found Hope.

This tree would do. It was sturdy, with bark as rough as sandpaper, with little knobs and swells that offered an easy grip. Gently, she placed her pack down on the earth, and unfurled the beaten leather cover, revealing a round furry face, liquid eyes, a twitching wet nose, and two velvety circular ears.

*"Come on, Hope, it's time to meet your new home."*



# *The Intriguing Nature*

**By Dhau Lee**

*Year 5*

Blue skies with dancing clouds were looking upon us,  
They were reading our minds of what we are.  
Clouds swirled into unique patterns,  
And disturbed our thoughts.

Tall green trees were swaying in a dance,  
filled with life.  
Logged trees covered in moss,  
calling for help to stop.

Stones in many diverse colours,  
Different shapes and sizes,  
Some in the creek some in bushes,  
Flat, round, rough, smooth, sharp and blunt.

As we enter closer,  
Dogs were barking, "Get out of my territory!"  
Chickens were clucking, "Who are they?"  
These are the tempos of nature.

Listen to their voices,  
Hear their cries.  
We are the torturers  
Of nature.



# The Creek

By Sophia Liu

Year 5

## Early Morning

As the morning sun climbs  
And the birds chirp their greetings  
The woods burst alive  
Seeking adventure

The morning rain falls  
Shining on the emerald leaves  
A call of life  
Fills the world

Hundreds of colourful birds  
Splashing in the creek  
Every ray of sunshine  
In colourful harmony

All life arises as one  
To smell the refreshing breath  
The world jumps alive  
Once more

## Afternoon

The sun at its height  
Now grows darker  
Shattering the foliage  
Is the old familiar wind

Moving once more  
Walking creatures  
Fantastic insects  
Singing a peaceful harmony

As little fledglings flap their wings  
A breath goes around the world  
With each leaf that drops to the ground  
The Earth seems heavier

Waves of branches  
Dancing in the air  
Creating music  
Deep in the bush

## Evening

Birds flying home  
Animals crawling back  
The earth is tired  
It needs to rest

Tiny drops of water  
Sprinkle from the sky  
Pinkish clouds, reddish clouds...  
Lighting a fire in heaven

Must the world be so quiet?  
So still, so dark  
As the sun disappears  
The blue moon rises

With every passing moment  
The forest grows quieter  
Away from urban bustle  
With a harmony of its own

# The Phantom of Hunts Creek

By Lara Tan

Year 5

My brain was fuzzy. Terrifying pictures flashed into my mind as I trashed around. My palms were sweating and my heart was pounding like a thousand men marching in a war. "AHHHHH!!!!!!" I screamed out in pain. Looking up, the moon hung in the star struck sky. My hair was in a ball of tangles and I could feel crimson red blood trickling down my face. I lie on my back as I stared at the stars dancing gracefully across the sky. In my mind, I was thinking about the great adventures I had at camp. Slowly my eyelids grew heavy and slid down while I fell into a deep sleep.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! Shrieked the alarm clock as it waddled around angrily on my bedside table. "Just 5 more minutes!" I moaned. "CAMP!" I rushed out of bed, slipped my skinny feet into my fluffy bunny slippers and dashed down the stairs. Instantly a sweet aroma hit me like a love arrow. "PANCAKES!" I squealed as saliva slithered down my mouth. Running out of time, I sped off to Hunts Creek for my camp without eating my favourite pancakes.

When I reached there, Cybil and Cosette were already there waiting impatiently. They were complaining how late I was while I apologised profusely.

Trudging through the leaves and twigs, I could hear the soft melody of the lorikeets as they perched on the tall trees that towered over us like the empire state building. I could feel the balmy breeze as it brushed across my face. Clouds danced gracefully across the azure blue sky and the sun shone gloriously upon my face. Then out of the corner of my eye, I saw a pale looking girl peering at us. Not believing what I saw, I rubbed my eyes but couldn't see the girl anymore. Shrugging my shoulders, I walked on with my chatterbox friends. We picked a nice shady spot next to a waterfall to pitch our tent. Raging water was lashing out of the cliff-mouth as it cascaded down the layers of rocks.

Reflections of snake like shapes rippled through the murky water. The air smelled fresh as the trees swayed in the breeze. Dancing around like a ballerina thinking about nothing, my thoughts were instantly interrupted by the petrified look of Cosette. "What's wrong?" I queried. "Well rumour has it, that the 'Phantom of Hunts Creek' roams around here!" shuddered Cosette. "Phantom of Hunts Creek!" I gasped. "Yes! A girl came here with her friends but went missing. They searched the whole area and couldn't find their bodies. From that day people have been seeing the girl and friends roaming around," explained Cosette. "Don't worry! It's probably a made-up story!" I encouraged. "I hope you are correct!" quivered Cosette.

After dinner, we sat around the campfire warming our hands as we told scary stories. When Cybil was talking about the lost girls, the air instantly turned dead silent and not a sound was heard except for the swaying of the trees and the crackling of the fire as it flickered frantically. It was then, that we decided it was time to go to bed.

The next morning was a more cheerful day. The birds were chirping away their melodious songs and the clouds chased each other across the turquoise blue sky. Today we decided to explore the place. First, we visited the pool area and then the sports centre. Thinking the sports centre was dull, we ambled towards a tall majestic building that had 'Library' written across. "Let's check it out!" smiled Cosette as she was a bookworm. Inside the library was a snappy librarian who sat at the reception desk. She had thick circle glasses that framed her beady eyes. Her face was as crumpled as scrunched up paper but she didn't seem to take notice of us. The smell of books hit me. Ambling through the rows of books, I went towards the newspaper section. Flicking through the newspaper slides, a title caught my eye, 'Missing Girls' it exclaimed as it plastered across the screen like a news flash. It wrote about three girls who went camping but never returned. Scrolling down the screen, I froze, when I saw the pictures of the girls and below the pictures were the names: Cybil, Cosette and Annabelle... Flashbacks of us falling down the cliff all came back to me like a tsunami.

We are the phantoms of Hunts Creek.



# Hunts Creek

By Tian Yang

Year 5

I wandered through the thick undergrowth with dry leaves crunching beneath my claws. Soon I hear the gentle trickle of water flowing. As I continued my path, it grew stronger and stronger until it drew into a loud rumble. Where did all this water come from? I wondered as I slowly crawled along the path. I was going to find out.

I slithered up the stream, through the tangling roots of eucalyptus trees with no bark. I come across some bushes dotted with tiny red berries. I gobbled down some of these juicy fruits and continued on my quest. I could hear the merry songs of birds and magpies busily searching for worms.

Suddenly, I heard light stomps above the whispers of the gentle breeze. After I lapped up some cool, fresh stream water with my long curled tongue I continued upstream. Soon I came across a great white tree without bark penetrating through a thick carpet of leaves on the forest floor. I was exhausted so I rested against the smooth white tree. As I allowed my curly tongue to take in the sweet senses around me, I also caught a hint of wool over the freshness of grass. After I gobbled down some scrumptious and fat crickets hiding in a long, mossy log, I ambled happily upstream. Leaves were calmly twirling down to the layer of soil and pebble, but just above the smell of dry leaves, I could also smell something strange...thud! I bumped into a gigantic rock. I peered up to see a long, spirally stair twisting its way upstream. I skipped up the stairs as they grew narrower and narrower. After a while I had to leap from rock to rock. Grunting with effort I hurled myself up the last step.

I found myself in an enormous clearing. A giant waterfall was splashing on layers of gigantic and tiny rocks, the roots of eucalypts penetrating through the rocks and dangling down greedily to fight over the sweet, fresh water. Vines were hanging down the rocks and dipping themselves in the water now and again. A beautiful expand of lili-pad floated on the water. I opened my wonky mouth wide to drink in the sweet scent of the waterfall, but something bitter was mingled with the waterfall and tasty slimy, snails. The scent drifted from the top of the splashing water where a no-tail (human) path chopped through the undergrowth. I decided to climb a tall, mossy rock I spotted with my beady, amber eyes.

I scrambled to the bottom of the rock and dug my sharp claws deep into the soft, damp moss. With every step I took, I seemed to slip against the rock. I hooked myself deeper and finally with a gigantic leap I landed on the smooth surface of the top of the rock. Huffing and puffing I peered over the tall shrubs, I caught a glimpse of gold and green and heard a loud rustle in the shrubs, but then everything was still again. I felt a stab of disappointment but the flames of curiosity of my sprit wouldn't be put out. I jumped down from the rock and started to climb the waterfall. Jumping from root to roof and hanging from sticky, overlapping cobwebs shinning with dew, I made my way up the steep waterfall.

As I poked my head out of a bush, a loud scream broke the calmness of the bush. I stared in alarm, a no-tail! It was pointing at me with it's crow like-claws and shouting in a language I didn't understand. I ducked back into the safety of a tall, wet bush. Hoping desperately it wouldn't come for me. As I peered out again I saw a bunch of no-tails grouped together. I sensed the bitter scent of skin, the strange scent of wool. Gold and green clothing, shining in the bright rays of sunshine. The scent and noise was overwhelming. Stomping noisily around the path and with strange sticks with black, pointy ends (pencils) and white thin bark (paper), which they scratch on, were the no-tails. A tall and fat one stepped forward and pointed with its claws at a bramble and muttered something. Then the group scratched the white bark and strolled easily down the steep staircase and disappeared around the waterfall.

With a pounding heart I decided to explore the waterfall. I found a huge cave behind the waterfall, inside a heap of moss for sleeping, well covered up by the thick vines and hidden from any curious no-tails. I also found a little pool with fresh, sweet water and large tadpoles swimming around in it. I then found a giant rock on to which rays of sun pierced through the leaves of giant eucalypts and flooded the smooth rock surface in a beautiful golden light. There was also a giant fallen tree dotted with mushrooms and covered by wet moss, some juicy, fat crickets had made a nest there and there was also a never-ending supply of bugs. One sunrise later, I made a comfy little nest on the cliff. Munching happily on crickets, I basked in the warm rays of the sun, everyday.

The giant waterfall is still there in a place apparently called something like Huts Creek or Hups Creek (Hunts Creek) and I still live in my comfortable little nest.



# A Crow

By Ivy Fu

Year 5

Through the eyes of a crow the forest was life.  
The tree's outstretched arms hugged her through the darkest of nights.  
The stream massaged her sore muscles with the purest of water.  
Raging water thundered at the bird cleansing the murky, ebony plumage.  
The wind teased her as they played a forever game of tip.  
She was young.  
Praise the onyx bird of beauty and grace as she tumbles down the tree with record speed.  
Gaze up as she seizes a worm of reasonable length.  
Returning to the nest with squawking chicks, each with beaks right open.  
Winter comes with a blanket of coldness resting over the sleepy chicks.  
As the three chicks shiver in the winter air, the crow dances to find prey for her little ones.  
Lizards and snakes rest, dreaming of food and spring.  
Spring comes with joyful melodies as animals dance with delight  
Newborns take their first glance of the world.  
The birds are ready to flaunt their new melodies to the outside world.  
Lizards are stumbling from their long rest into the bright morning sun.  
The chicks are ready to leave their mother into a new world, into a new harsh world.  
The chicks are ready to become adults and to start a new life, never forgetting their mother, their dear mother.  
The new adults spread their wings in the summer air, tasting new delicacies of berries, tree sap and moss.  
See them fly into the vermilion sky, elegant, just like their mother back in the old nest.  
They rest on a tree root near the stream, the very stream their mother bathed in.  
Summer comes with delight as the chicks separate and start their very own lives.  
Each one of them found a partner to spend the rest of their lives with.  
Of course they still remember their precious chickhood and their mother, their dear mother.  
Remembering the troubles they caused and the delightful smiles they brought to the mother's face.  
Autumn comes with deep brown and crimson leaves blowing on the crow's now ancient feathers.  
She has had the excitement of being a grandmother of nine young and very fine chicks.  
She has had enough excitement in her life.  
She has seen the mates of her daughters and sons, whom she had admitted to be very good mates.  
Slowly the rain splatters her lead coloured plumage as she slowly closes her eyes forever, as her body goes limp under the shadow that towers over her.  
The mahogany leaves surround her, trapping her under an eternal blanket.  
Her grandchildren grown into noble crows, forever roaming the forest to their content,  
Hearing tales from their parents, of their perished grandmother whom they admire.  
They heard tales of her saving chicks from a raging bushfire or a ravenous snake.  
She was their idol.  
Humans came long after the crow fell into an eternal sleep.  
They came chopping trees down with mechanics, clearing paths.  
Exterminating fauna and flora, her descendants fleeing from their forever homes.  
Humans came here smiling, laughing, never knowing the damage they forever did.  
School children also came to the now humble trek or Hunts Creek as they call.  
They came here to study for a writing unit and this is how this story started.  
Through one school student this story started, but of course this story could have very well been a true story.  
The very crow could be looking at you in disgust, looking down at you humans.  
The people who destroyed her prized home, her precious home.  
Remember, the animals don't ruin their happily ever after.

# Found

By Helen Liu  
Year 6

To Rue, Hunts Creek was a sanctuary. As a child, it had been a place where trouble slipped from her mind and where her imagination ran loose. Even when her father took off for the city in hopes of finding a better life, she was comforted by the bushland's arms. Hunts Creek was the only place where everything really did come to life.

Entering the bushland was like entering a grand opening. The blades of grass were soldiers, bowing down to Rue. The birds were the kingdom's musicians, chirping the bushland's main melody. Each tree was a guardian of its own region and had suffered the relentless ambush of fire in order to protect it. The sun's arms extended through the leaves, caressing the several children it had raised. Its presence rejuvenated each and every one of the plants, ponds and animals. Each moment gave Rue a sense of security, tranquility and respect.

However, all that ended when Rue left to pursue her dreams of being a singer. It took almost every fibre in her body to forsake the bushland, one of the few sparks in her life, for a taste of the city.

The city was vastly different to the bushland. Everyone was the same. Their eyes were either glued to the screen or instead, had a cigarette hanging lopsided out of their lips. Blatant music coupled with neon lights were fig leaves for the horde of filthy buildings crouched together, confined in a behemoth of pollution. The buildings were no better than a poor substitute for the lush green trees dominating Hunts Creek.

At night, instead of the gush of water, drunk alcoholics staggered through the road, challenging lamp posts to fight with them. The rambunctious cacophony of impatient drivers cursing at each other and honking their horns threw the city into distortion.

Even when Rue won the biggest talent show across the country, nothing piqued any interest.

Journalists were mosquitos swarming around her, morphing each minute of her life into several headlines and articles.

In the city, singing required no talent at all. One was considered a singer if they pulled off publicity stunts and feuds with other celebrities while earning thousands of dollars in the process.

Being drowned in fame delivered nothing but an encumbering burden. It was as if Rue was running in an eternal pitch black tunnel of nightmares with no sense of direction. Taking drugs only seemed to extend that tunnel.

Time seemed to be grains of sand slipping through Rue's fingers. The ebb and flow of microphones being shoved in her face made her a machine repeating the same routine constantly over the transitory days. It was as if Rue was ostracised from any ebullience she obtained before.

Rue wandered onto the streets, a pair of sunglasses smothering her identity. A monotonous and lugubrious atmosphere as usual. Heads immersed in newspapers faced her, oblivious of anything else. Not a single thing in the city came to life the way it did in the bushland. Even the pigeons lacked any life, constantly crying out for food. If anything, they were a nuisance.

Only a homeless man caught her attention from the corner of her eye. He sat in a bundle of old clothes, his striking storm grey eyes drooping but still open. Rue felt those eyes follow her as she walked. Something about him seemed peculiar.

"May I help you?" she asked, a tinge of skepticism lingering in her voice.

"By the looks of it, you're not from here. And you don't seem to enjoy it either," the man croaked.

"I'm on a search for my fath-" The man's eyelids flew open. Rue's eyes widened.

"Rue, is that you?" The two of them stood in shock. For a few seconds, they stared at each other. The odds of finding a long lost relative in a place like this fell below nil.

Rue's father gathered himself together and tightly hugged his daughter.

"I know it hasn't been long, but you have to get out of here," he whispered.

"What? Why?" Rue asked, unable to bottle up her confusion.

"The city is a tide which effaces those not prepared enough, replacing them with incorrigible souls vacuous of life. You need to go back," her father warned.

A dead wick rekindled itself faintly. Just the thought of a balmy zephyr cruising across her face in the bushland shook all of Rue's stress away. Her father had been right. It was time to go home.

The effect of the bushland was powerful. The moment a leaf slid down her face, a smile played on Rue's face. A refreshing wave of nostalgia flooded into her mind. The birds immediately burst into chorus, flitting through the trees to spread the news of her return. The sun gazed upon Rue, beaming radiantly.

Rue stopped at the pond. She bent down, allowing the cold water to tickle her bruised fingers. Rue gazed at her reflection. A teenager caked in makeup shot back at her a fleeting glare filled with a cold pertinence. Shame and guilt gripped Rue's stomach. Was she still the girl who ruled the bushland a few years ago? She was unsure. But one thing was certain: she was back at her sanctuary.

# Daisy

By Deljin Javadi

Year 6

"No!"

She struggles under the intricate knots of the rope binding her to her chair. She refuses to give up. She refuses to have her life end so suddenly. She refuses her fate. But sometimes, it's too late.

He takes a step closer. A small step, but to her, it's as if she's getting closer and closer to death.

She looks around her. The forest, once a calm and friendly place seems sinister now. The leaves pale in the moonlight, the branches dividing up the blanket of stars overhead. The bright lights, once peaceful, now seem like a shattered image.

He takes another step forward, his face illuminated in the dull moonlight. His arm raises above his head, still tightly clutching the large stone he had previously picked up. The arrow on his wrist is fully visible now. She turns her focus upwards, forcing herself to look at the sky. She is entranced, almost in a daze and his last words seem distant, as if she is hearing them through a thick glass. "I told your mother before. Now I tell you. If I can't have you. No one else can."

She doesn't see, rather senses his arm falling downwards, the stone swinging towards her head. And in that moment, her eyes close and she has a moment of temporary peace. Suddenly, something cold and hard hits her head. Her world shatters into a million pieces, yet there is no one there to help to put them back together again.

The rock, stained with a dark crimson, hits the ground. A ring of dust rises as it collides with the leaves, sinking. They will hide his secrets.

Venus

Someone once told me, that after your life ends, you have seven minutes of brain activity left. In these seven minutes, you relive your memories, but faster than ever before, as though someone pressed the fast forward button on the story of your life. A time lapse video of your life.

I always thought that was quite beautiful. But now, I'd rather skip it.

Someone else once told me, that you need that seven minutes to prepare yourself. For what comes next. And although I wish against it, I am dragged into a whirlwind of memories, pulling me downwards into a spiral of thoughts, of images and sounds, of memories, good and bad.

"Vee!"

A small girl, running towards me, a lopsided mess of daisies in her hand. Her blonde hair bounces as she approaches me, her white dress flowing behind her. She is still clumsy, not yet at the proper age, and she topples to the ground in front of me. I lose her in a mist of green, yellow and white. Her green eyes travel upwards to meet mine and her hand, still chubby, hands me the hastily prepared daisy chain.

I want to stay here, surrounded by the twittering of birds, and the splash of the water against the rocks. But once again, I am dragged downwards, into a darker memory.

"Daddy?"

Rhea's curious green eyes raise to meet his.

"I'll be back," he says. He raises his arm and waves at us with one last smile. I stare at his wrist; the familiar navy blue arrow, unable to meet his gaze.

The asylum guards push him towards the black van. As he passes Mother though, he stops momentarily. Saying something briefly. Her face becomes shadowed with worry. "You can't have them." I hear her say. The guards push him past. And that's it. He's gone.

The fast forward button is pushed once again and I speed through my life, landing on another memory.

This time, the forest is dark. I realise which memory I'm in. The beginning of the end.

No.

I don't want to face it. But I can't help it. History will repeat itself. No matter how hard I wish against it.

"Rhea?"

I yell out into the dark abyss. My hands are cupped together around my mouth, and the sound of my voice echoes out through the rocks. "Rhea! Come out! It's not funny anymore!" It's cold out and my hands are freezing and.... I stop cold in my tracks.

In front of me, there is a small clearing. And in the middle, a small figure. As I approach, I can just make out the shape of a small girl. Ten or eleven, pale in the moonlight. Delicate blond hair surrounds her head, like a halo. "Rhea?" I lower my voice this time. I approach slowly. It's not her. I shake my head. It's not her. It can't be.

But there, in the dull light provided by the moon, I see her hand. The same pudgy hand which gave to me a mess of daisies, one day in a forest which once seemed magical.

I sink onto my knees, the soft grass tickling my skin. It can't be. My vision is blurred with tears and my cheeks are already wet. Through the tears, I can see a single flower. White and yellow. I lift my hand to wipe my tears. A daisy. Her favourite. I pick it up, hands quivering and place it in her hand. Small and innocent.

Suddenly, a rustle of leaves from behind me. I turn and see him. Out of instinct, I look over at his left wrist. I blink, still in shock. Because under the blood stains on his wrist- the blood stains from HER head- is a small arrow.

I close my eyes and for once, things go as I want. I snap out of it. The seven minutes is over. As I drift away, out of my life, I can think only a single thought; even now, even now, I refuse to believe my own father would do this. The father who once, on a bright day, took me to a magical forest and handed me a single daisy.



# Hunts Creek

By Vanessa Zheng

Year 6

## Summer

As I stood lost in my thoughts,  
Sunlight poured into my eyes  
I squinted at the sudden light  
Unprepared for nature's gift

I found myself in a city of trees  
Playing hide and seek  
Beyond what I can see  
But imagination solved the puzzle

Lush vegetation was everywhere,  
And a spider's web dangled  
Shining radiantly  
As a leaf slams into it

Distance calls came a bird's crow  
Calling for its partner  
Locating each other's whereabouts  
To reunite in cheerful wills

Blooming flowers were plotted across the path  
Red, blue, green and yellow.  
Like splotches of flamboyant paint  
As I made my path across like an anxious kid

Ahead of me stood a magnificent waterfall  
Water cascaded down the rocks  
Which seemed like a monster's mouldy teeth  
Snarling back at me

I felt the splashes of water flying onto me,  
Tickling my skin,  
As the constant clashing of water  
Brought a smile to my face

I gazed into the pond,  
And noticed my own reflection  
Beyond the murky water  
Staring back at me

A hollow log stood in the path  
It's insides empty  
Devoured by termites  
And inhabited by insects

Berries dangled from a nearby tree  
Tempting me to pick a few  
But something told me  
That those weren't edible

Leaves crunched below my feet  
Stretched in an interminable line  
Bark peeling off  
Growing out of its trunk

Two roads separated  
Tempting me to choose one  
Decisions must be made  
But I, as a traveller, chose the left path

A spider web hung like a hammock  
The sunshine hitting it  
Shining radiantly under the sun  
Flowing with the wind

A few more paces were taken  
Before I witnessed my cottage  
Standing in front of me  
I shuffled toward it

The adventure has ended  
Just as the sun fell over the horizon  
Dusk fell  
As crickets began their nightly quest

# Angel Of The Forest

By Freya Chen

Year 6

An eerie silence haunted the forest. This forest had no warmth. A special human used to bring light to this forest but then..... the human died. The light became fainter and fainter for the forest. At least that's what the legend says and what everyone believes. They say that after the human died, it was as if the warmth just flew away. The water stopped flowing, the sun no longer shone. It was as if the whole forest died along with the human.....

The high pitched sound of laughter echoed through the forest. All ears perked that way. A little girl was running around this deep, dark space. Her amber eyes were filled with happiness. Her curly blonde hair bounced over her back. The animals watched in awe as this little girl danced and pranced in this cold and dark forest. This forest where no one laughed. This forest where humans were terrified to enter. This forest.... where.... every single animal was spell bound by this mystical human who suddenly appeared in the forest.

Her name was Lisa. Lisa Evergreen. She lived in a cottage with her father who was an animal hunter. She loved animals and hated the fact her father was an animal hunter. But they still loved each other very much. Her mother had died and she felt great pain when it happened. But when she thought of her dad, she decided to bring happiness to him, knowing the loss of his lover would affect him more. This strengthened her to never let anything come in her way of having a smile. She knew that her mother was in the sky looking over them.

Lisa pranced around and around in the forest. It felt like the only place where she could do whatever she wanted. She had come here three days straight, never noticing those pairs of eyes that were always watching her every movement. Suddenly, she heard a rustling noise. Finally, she noticed the eyes that were on her. Realising that she noticed them, the animals slowly, with hesitation, came out of their hiding. Any human would have been terrified. Scared out of their wits to meet all these dangerous and wild beasts. But Lisa was different. She spent most of her time with animals. During that time she learnt their languages. Understood what they said. The animals she stayed with were her only friends. She learnt that most animals never knew what it meant to have warmth.

There were a few seconds of silence before one of the animals decided to speak out. It was an old grey wolf with piercing yellow eyes.

"Who are you human?" he asked in his gruff voice. He and his pack began growling, trying to make this strange human feel afraid. But instead Lisa did something they never expected. She gave them a kind smile and beckoned them towards her. At first, they just stood there, confused. None of them knew what to do. Should they go to this mysterious human, or not? But then one small grey wolf squeezed out of its place in the pack and ran towards her. That was all it took for the others to follow. Their parents tried to tell them to come back. But they didn't listen. They wanted to go to the warmth that was being shone towards them. Something they knew would only happen once in a lifetime. Slowly, the other animals began giving into the warmth. Finally, all the animals in the forest lied at the feet of the little girl feeling the brightness they were being given. They were engulfed in the warmth. As night fell, they closed their eyes and waited for the next day....

Lisa woke up first in the morning. She was leaning on a bear that was basking in her warmth. She stood up, not waking anyone else and disappeared into the darkness. When the other animals awoke, Lisa was nowhere to be found. While they were still worried about where she was, they were even more shocked by the forest. The sun's rays were piercing through the trees and all the fauna was green and blooming. The water was trickling on the rocks, forming patterns on the stones and trees nearby. So shocked were they by the view, they didn't notice the little girl standing on the tree. Watching them. Smiling. Knowing that her job was finished. That she needed to leave now. As she was about to disappear into the darkness, she saw. Saw her father. Saw that gun he was pointing at her friends.

Then she jumped. Jumped in the way to save her friends. The animals looked in shock as their angel's heart was pierced with a bullet. They couldn't believe what had happened. Their eyes wide and heart beating fast. Lying in the heart of the forest, was an angel on a crimson ground. Something trickled down their cheeks. It felt so cold. They were tears. Lisa's father froze, shocked at what he had done. He had shot his one and only beloved daughter. Falling down on his knees, he held her. He rocked her like a baby and cried until no tears could come out anymore.

Yet, when all of them looked at her face, there was a smile there. No anger, disappointment or sadness. Instead, in her eyes was a sparkle. She coughed out more blood but then began to sing. She sang a melody that echoed through the forest. But when she died, no longer could they hear that melody in the angel's voice or feel the warmth she gave them. An angel they thought that had come down from heaven. But the melody was something no one could forget. Why? Because this was the song of an angel. The angel that resides in the heart of the forest, dwelling deep in all the creatures hearts. It was the Angel Of The Forest.



# Ruhe Forest

**By Kayla Lee**

Year 6

"Give it up." Fleur says.

"No" I shoot back.

"You've had five liquorice wheels"

"Fine."

I give in reluctantly. We always have the same argument as we walk past Ruhe Forest. After school we buy sweets from the corner shop. We absolutely loath the cashier, forever sucking his teeth when the bells chime on top of the glass door. It's not very hard to hate someone even if you don't know them. He sells magazines for the lady with red stilettos. He sells newspaper for the old man with a Sherlock Holmes hat. He sells sherbets, gum, and lollypops for the little kids who beg their parents to buy them candy. And best of all he sells red liquorice wheels for me and dolly mixtures for Fleur.

We always walk to school and walk back home together. This is our route. Walk past the Fairy Bookshop (we usually have a good browse over the books, I recently bought Anne of Green Gables). Stroll pass the ice cream cafe. We occasionally rent a video from Mr. Tip. Then the corner store where we always go. Then there's the forest. I do my best to avoid it, walking right on the other side of the road. Everyone who lives close by knows the legendary story. Some tourist called something Smith went for a picnic out there and has never been heard of since. The story is as old as the man who buys newspaper and cigarettes at the corner store.

"Why do you only ever walk on that side? Are the pavements too cracked over there? Scared you'll have bad luck?" Fleur enquires

I forgot; Fleur is new to Ruhe Village

So I go through the whole story, slightly over exaggerating as she sucks her dolly mixtures, her eyes distant.

"Then we must go," she says.

I stop short.

'WHYYYYY', I whine (I'm a big wimp).

'We must solve the mystery of Mr. Smith.' she declares.

We argue for ages. She's on the debating team for goodness sake! I eventually give in, so we decide to meet up on Saturday and solve the dreaded mystery of Mr. Smith.

Saturday

I get dressed, over doing the detective look a little. I wear a beige tweed hat, a felt grey coat and a leather brief case containing a black notebook and pen, a magnifying glass, binoculars and a film camera.

I guess great minds think alike because Fleur dresses up like Doctor Who. We hold hands as we cross the road, but I want to turn back find the nearest mouse hole, shrink down and fall down inside. But Fleur has a firm grip. We're very good at imagining, I know what we are both picturing, some bloody ghost wailing for revenge. We decide if we see some wafting see through cloak we will throw rocks and sticks far off so it would get distracted and we will ditch everything and run. We start to leave a trail of dolly mixtures and liquorice wheels, because we don't want to end up as another Grimm brothers story. The leaves crunch and the branches snap beneath our feet and wind wails all around us.

"Hey!" Fleur says, looking up at the sky.

As I crane my neck upwards, I can see why she became so fascinated.

Pastel blue blanket covering the sky like I've never seen, dappled with cotton swabs. There are the towering trees, the branches dividing up the sky. The sunlight escaping between the lime green leaves are like beaming stars. As we walk on everything is quiet apart from the rustling bushes, bird calls and water rushing.

'Fleur! Can you hear that?' I ask, she turns around closing her eyes and walks in the direction of gushing water. I tread on top of the tree roots emerging from the ground. I catch a glimpse of clear water before brushing leaves out of my way. I see lime, olive and jade leaf ships sailing through the ripples. I hear the repeated rushing of the waterfall. I inhale the fresh air, cleaning out the smell of petrol. Yellow leaves fall like raindrops as the wind brushes past. We sit down, forgetting everything, the forest capturing our minds and taking us to a whole new world. The trees sway and the leaves whisper - BEEP, BEEP, BEEEEEP! I stand up lost between the world of nature and peace and gas stations and cars. I open my brief case and reach out for the binoculars.

"Well? What can you see?" Fleur asks.

"A Mini Cooper." I reply.

"What? Let me see."

We snap out of our dream and venture forwards, but we resolve to return later.

As we walk we can hear people talking, bells ringing, and cars honking. It is a village alright but not our village.

"Hello lass, you look new, you from Ruhe Village?" asks an old man.

"Yes, umm but excuse me, where are we?" I ask

"At Canary Village, I'm John by the way."

"I'm Lily and she's Fleur."

"Do you know any Smiths around here?" Fleur pipes.

"Of course he won't." I mutter.

"As far as I know, I do and that's me." He says brightly.

We stare at him for at least a solid 10 minutes before we ask questions to clarify that it is him.

### THREE DAYS LATER

"We've truly done it, we solved a mystery and found the best place ever." Fleur says as we lie down at Ruhe Forest the grass tickling our ears.

"We don't have to tell anybody, do we?" I say

"Of course we don't, it'll be our secret Teribithia."

We suck dolly mixtures and nibble liquorice wheels.

I hear the leaves rustling and the water gushing, I see the blue sea above us and the lush green land below us.

Ruhe Forest is just as much alive as we are.

# Child of the Forest

By Vidara Atapattu

Year 5

Pitter, patter, drop, drop  
Gleaming gems on the rooftop  
Teardrops glimmer in the sun  
Dripping down, one by one

Every droplet has a story to tell  
Each one signals, rings a bell  
Whether it's the Giant Kangaroo  
Or Bilargu the Daroo

A bird rustles, delicate wings  
Pulling all the morning strings  
The sunlit paths lead to heaven  
The people enjoy it without a question

The world is a peaceful place  
All harm is scarce  
But the deep blue sky staring down  
It judges us with a frown

I smile up at the sky  
It stares back asking why?  
Why does blue have to be the queen?  
Why couldn't it be purple or green?

All the people in this world  
No matter boy or girl  
Brown, Black or white skin  
They all have something in common

Together, they are all friends  
They all help us amend  
Who we are and what we do  
To make all of us a unique view

But, our culture is teased  
Our creations are ceased  
What we used to hold  
Is under a blindfold

As Wiyanga calls, my vision shatters  
And my worries turn into real life matters  
Another day I have to struggle  
And face all of the worldly troubles

The chirping of a bird warms my heart  
It felt like the world and me were far apart  
Then the time comes, I reach the school gate  
My warm heart turns into solid slate

All eyes are staring at me  
I trudge forward imploring with plea  
That no one will hurt me or call me names  
So I don't have to feel ashamed

With the bellowing roar of teachers  
The pain inside me reaches  
On goes the furious lunch time bell  
Noisy, like a frustrated yell

Out in the playground  
I try to keep the mean voices drowned  
But their words bite through my skin  
And I let the vicious snakes win

I try to hold my tears in  
But the emotional roller coaster takes over my  
feelings  
I feel weak in the knees  
And my blood starts to freeze

I feel the need to run  
My life is near done  
Afraid to glance ahead  
All the unwanted miseries that circle in my  
head

My legs stumble forward  
I feel so tortured  
My mind is blank  
And for once I don't have God to thank

I stop in the middle of nowhere  
I have no distance to spare  
My mind wanders  
While I saunter

I tread upon a clearing  
While my heart is tearing  
What if I never find my way home  
What if I'm lost all alone

What if Wiyanga calls  
No one's going to be there if she falls  
I feel a rough arm on my side  
A coiled branch tall and wide

My ears near to a sound  
A thundering waterfall was what I found  
The droplets of water seeping through the  
cracks  
While the fauna huddles, bundled in stacks

The birds sing their beautiful song  
This sanctuary is where they belong,  
A dead tree is filled with life  
The termites teeth, as sharp as a knife

The moss covered rocks are abundant with life  
All the insects struggle, thrive  
I laugh at the memory of when Wiyanga gave  
me bush tucker  
She would help me in times of succour

Sadness fills my face  
As I imagine Wiyanga in puzzle and disgrace  
But, the whereabouts of a stunted tree  
Leads to a magical scree

I walk towards it  
Passing the glowing leaves that are sunlight  
The bellowing sound of the water hitting the  
rocks  
The unusual comfort of the trickling drops

But I am unaware of the trees that resent me  
For stepping on the bulgy roots of their tree  
I look up at the green sky above  
The canopy that all hidden animals love

I stare ahead of me  
A painting that smiles with glee  
An untouched wilderness  
Every inch filled with tenderness

I stand on the rough, rocky ground  
Why should I be afraid to make a sound?  
If I change  
Our culture will change

My mind grows strong  
Black is not wrong  
We were the owners  
They weren't the controllers

I am the child of the sun  
I am the child of the forest  
I am Aboriginal  
I am Alinga.





# James Ruse Agricultural High School

Our school is well known for the high academic achievements of our students. We are proud of their outstanding Higher School Certificate and School Certificate results, just as we are proud of student success in the Olympiads in mathematics, biology, physics, informatics and chemistry, where they are part of the Australian teams annually. We congratulate our students for winning competitions in English, writing, poetry, economics, business studies, geography, languages, (eg Japanese), technology, science and engineering, computer programming and in cattle showing. We value the teaching and the special programs that lead to our students reaching great heights.

However our focus is on the whole person. The extensive involvement of our ex-students in the life of the school is evidence of the wonderful, responsible young people we produce - young people who are full of the enjoyment all aspects of life offer. Our students, indeed, embody the school motto, Gesta non verba - Deeds not words.

**Ms Megan Connors** - *Principal*



# My Children

By Afra Kamal  
Year 8 A

From millennia of practise,  
I hear your heavy footfalls,  
Light-hearted conversation  
Long before  
You notice me.  
Oh! I see you now,  
And I recognise  
Most, save few  
Of your young company,  
From many moons ago.  
The ragged breaths,  
Curves of your cheek,  
Glint in your eyes,  
I remember them all.

But my dears, why the long faces?  
Why, pray tell  
Do scowls and frowns and furrowed eyebrows  
Mar the mask I so meticulously crafted  
For you to wear with pride.  
What terrible fate has befallen my children  
So that you must be burdened  
With such negativity.

Is it the chilled air this winter's morn?  
Oh, my children, do forgive me.  
I cannot play favourites,  
For your brothers and sisters of the north  
Must also feel the soft caress of the sun on  
their skin.  
As you shiver in your attire  
Not at all proper for this occasion,  
And huddle together  
Hoping for just a sliver of warmth,  
I weep for your suffering,  
For no child of mine  
Should be pained at all.

Soon, you begin to wander  
Along paths woven through Hunts Creek  
Long before you were born.  
In this pocket of nature,

True reality,  
Hidden, smothered by suburbia,  
You begin to live.  
It is joyous to watch  
As the birds sing your praises  
In a tongue  
Not understood by you  
But,  
You still hear its sweet, sweet symphony  
And find beauty in it.

Darlings, how much you have grown,  
In height and in mind.  
I send to you  
A spiralling of leaves  
Arching, dancing in the wind  
To kiss your cheeks  
And delight your eyes,  
In a flurry of lush life.

Oh! My children, so clever you are  
You have found the waterfall  
I designed for you.  
It is not much,  
Far less impressive than my other creations,  
Ones you've seen in books and heard of in  
stories.  
But you are in awe all the same.

For a moment,  
I slow time.  
You stare at the water glistening in the sun  
Still, not a word uttered between you.  
Then,  
One of you takes cautious steps  
To the edge of the shallow pool  
And dips her hand in.  
The incessant ripples in the liquid  
Shatter the calm you portrayed  
But I do not mind.  
Your laughter,  
As you climb over mossy rocks  
Explore your wild surroundings,  
And happiness,  
As you finally feel content,  
Is all that I could ever wish for.

My children,  
I have given you a home for so long.  
I created for you,  
From my own flesh and blood,  
This place you call Earth.  
I have watched you become  
Such wondrous people.  
And yet,  
Some of you still mock me.  
Oil spills you choke me with  
And the forests you slaughter.

Is it not enough?  
What I have given you.  
Do you still crave more?

Children, I have become weak,  
As every mother does,  
When her children blossom.  
You know,  
That it is killing me.  
I would give up everything  
Just so that you could live your dreams.  
But I must draw the line.

For so long you have taken,  
And taken,  
And taken,  
And I have given with glee.  
It is time now  
For you to heal your mother.  
I can not bear the thought  
Of losing you  
As I have lost others in the past.

It is the only way that you,  
My dear children,  
Will survive  
This beautifully deadly place  
I made for you.  
Remember  
That I wish for you  
All the happiness  
And love  
A mother can give her children.

In this life,  
And the next.

# Eyes of the Forest

By Natalie Le

Year 8 A

We trees are very much rooted to the spot, and it can be assumed that our immobility does not permit us to see much of the world. This assumption often leads to the belief that a tree's existence is quite monotonous. On the contrary, I can assure you that when living in this forest – a very generous name for this small patch of bushland – life is anything but monotonous, especially when the humans are involved.

Allow me to tell you about humans based on my past encounters with them. Each morning without fail, humans wearing obnoxiously bright clothes enter the forest and disappear down the forest trails. They reappear a short time afterwards looking as if they have just had a particularly nasty encounter with Mother Nature's wrath. Their faces are flushed beetroot red and their clothes are soaked through as if they had just dived into the creek. At midday, sometimes a human enters followed by a swarm of little humans all clad in the same clothes. Sometimes, I wonder how the lead human can possibly deal with this many offspring – perhaps Mother Nature has granted them a unique power? Possibly to compensate for that awful attire they don? Despite never having worn any clothes myself, I can tell that the lead humans obviously lack a fashion sense, something the children in the lovely green jackets with the golden rams emblazoned on their chests can help remedy.

The humans never arrive alone, however. In their large backpacks and seemingly bottomless pockets, are their mischievous companions – small, colourful and agile creatures, which vault free of their confinements and are carried by the breeze to the far ends of the forest. They come in all different sizes; some have a metallic sheen and make a satisfying crackling sound when they are squashed, while others are clear with coloured labels and produce a hollow thump as they land on the rocks. Despite doing the most daring acrobatic stunts I've ever seen, sometimes they decide to float lazily in the river, cruising alongside the dead leaves, before they finally reach their destination – an enormous nest of similar creatures, whose population seems to accumulate more and more members by the day. I often see the poor little animal inhabitants look wistfully at what had once been a pristine environment where they could flourish now invaded by these foreigners, who are very adamant against moving out again.

As the sun casts its first rays of sunlight onto the forest, I also find different creatures with wire grids around a hollow middle on their backs with four rigid legs in the air. Occasionally, when the wind blows, their red, circular feet swivel slowly then creak to a stop as the breeze dies down. They seem to multiply each week, and for some reason, always seem to appear at night, under the cover of darkness. It is as if they have nightly mating rituals – if that peculiar rattling I sometimes hear is any indication. They seem to prefer doing their business beneath the high rock ledges of the creek, away from prying eyes. Recently, their offspring have developed a new strain – their feet are green rather than the customary red and their handles are inscribed with a strange name – Woolworths, I think? Although, if they do continue breeding in the creek, I'm sure the other creatures will appreciate it if they don't obstruct the water's flow or occupy so much space. For a tree as tall as I am, looking downwards all the time can make my neck ache, so I gaze out above the tops of my sisters – only to be met by these long, thin black lines which cut across the azure sky. The sky is vast, yet these black wires are endless. They seem to stretch further still and as I squint into the distance, I can see more of them – hundreds of them criss-crossing across the sky like a spider's web. The winds who dare approach the lines warn us of the incredible power they contain. My younger siblings cower in fear of these wires, and they refuse to grow, afraid of what lies ahead should they ever accidentally grow too tall. Sometimes, I spend my days wondering – whatever possessed the humans to build such a thing, for travel? For decoration? They are such strange, strange creatures, and their antics almost make me laugh, if it weren't for the danger their strange behaviour posed on my fellow sisters and friends in the forest.

For the past two decades, I have watched over the reserve alongside my sisters. We have watched the humans enter our forest, and although we find their antics amusing, as the decades pass we have begun to notice changes. Changes to our surroundings. Our environment. Our home. The vibrant green leaves have started yellowing, the mightiest of my siblings no longer stand as proudly as they did before and the bush creatures we call our friends conceal themselves in the shadows, no longer roaming freely as they used to. As time progresses, the smiles begin to fade from our faces, as we realise that over the span of the decades, slowly but surely, we have become like foreigners in our own territory.



# Nature's Struggle

By Adrian Lai  
Year 8 A

Ripples emerged, the pond gyrated  
As a drop of water penetrated the surface.  
Nature's magic evident in the Sanctuary,  
Depicted by her gentle touch.  
The cries of offspring echoing through the forest,  
Rustling leaves began to sway harder,  
The winds intensify.

Acacia woods surround the colony,  
Like a tsunami enveloping a helpless town.  
A dark orange tinge,  
A towering height.  
Leaves clashing, swinging endlessly,  
Nature's gift.

The cursed acacia tree in the centre,  
Marked with missing bark.  
Tainted with a scarlet red substance,  
Emanating from the body.  
Like a severe wound,  
A natural laceration.

How it got there, no one knows.  
The fluid trickled down the bark,  
Battle scars.  
From a war between man and wild.  
Once living in harmony,  
Now in jeopardy.  
A disjunct melody.

Howls of agony flow through the forest,  
Like death's greeting.  
They cower in fear, awaiting the predator,  
Anticipating death to come.  
Rustle. Crack.  
An entity's silhouette pounced,  
Fallen.

# Two Perspectives

By Sarah Phae  
Year 8 A

## Hunts Creek in Winter

Light refracts  
Like a rainbow kaleidoscope  
On the silken glass surface  
Broken by a single leaf  
Producing  
Perpetually endless ripples  
Eternal.  
Clear water carves a pathway  
Through mossy rocks into the  
Murky depths,  
Fading into inky ebony blackness  
Sending rivulets of vibrant hues  
Rippling through my eyes.

A silver thread gleams  
Golden in the saturated sunlight  
A necklace unattainable through  
Worldly riches.  
Blood-red  
Tree sap glistens  
A priceless ruby  
In the neck of this forest.

Jade vines crawl  
Tirelessly, inch by inch  
Unshaken by the wind  
Persevering.  
The eucalyptus splits  
Into two as it ascends  
Like how the crossroad ahead splits  
In the rocky pathway  
Of life.  
While kookaburras  
A living totem  
Cackle raucously  
And the dappled grey shadows  
Whisper into my ear  
In the language of the spirits.  
If we  
Perceive with our eyes  
Detect with our ears  
Forget with our hearts  
The chilling embrace  
Of winter  
As it caresses our bare skin  
Then  
Even the  
Blue of your lips  
And the  
Red of your nose  
Will become incandescent in memory  
Something to reminisce  
In the distant future.

## Hunts Creek on Wednesday Morning

Wednesday morning,  
Instead of  
The normal, fun  
PDHPE  
We simply  
Go on a walk  
  
At Hunts Creek  
Clear water carves a pathway through the  
Mossy green rocks into  
The murky depths.  
Perfect aesthetics.

Out of instinct someone  
Takes out a phone,  
Instagram is never  
Forgotten.  
But of course,  
The teacher tells us to  
'Put that thing away'  
So grumbling,  
We do.  
Without the phone we are  
Lost.  
Blind.  
With eyes manufactured  
So that they are unable  
To see  
Anything without a screen.

They tell us to  
Observe  
And feel  
Hunts Creek  
In our shoe.  
But who wants to feel  
Hunts Creek in their shoes?

My friend is  
Blissfully unaware of the  
Minuscule bug crawling along the length of the  
page  
Before taking flight.  
Right in front of her  
Nose.  
But manages to spot the  
Upturned Coles shopping cart  
In the Creek  
Ten metres away.

We walk  
Oblivious to the  
Blood-red tree sap petrified in mid drip  
Or the kookaburras as they cackle from high  
above,  
Or the dead log as it yields life in the form of  
mushrooms  
The same way in which the sunlight refracts off  
the murky waters  
To give life to the thick undergrowth  
And the variety of twigs and rocks littering the  
path  
And the vines of ivy creeping up the trees  
Unhindered by the wind,  
The tree-trunk splits into two as it ascends  
Like how the crossroad ahead of us splits  
In life.

But

We are  
Only too aware  
Of the  
Cold clammy extremes  
At the end of our limbs  
And the blue of our lips  
And the red of our noses,  
Of the winter  
As it caresses our bare skin  
And embraces us  
Completely in its arms.

And I am  
Only too relieved  
To go back  
To factor trees  
And  
Streams of calculations  
To caged rooms  
Blasting  
Artificial heat.  
And soon even the Hunts Creek  
In

My  
Shoes

Are  
Forgotten.



# Wind

By Linda Wang  
Year 8 L

I am a commander,  
Directing my subjects.  
With one touch of my magic,  
The mightiest trees bow,  
The leaves swirl dangerously,  
With no aim.

I am a loving parent,  
Playing with my children.  
I near leaves,  
Tickling, teasing, caressing.  
Chuckling as I leave,  
Air filled with giggling rustles.

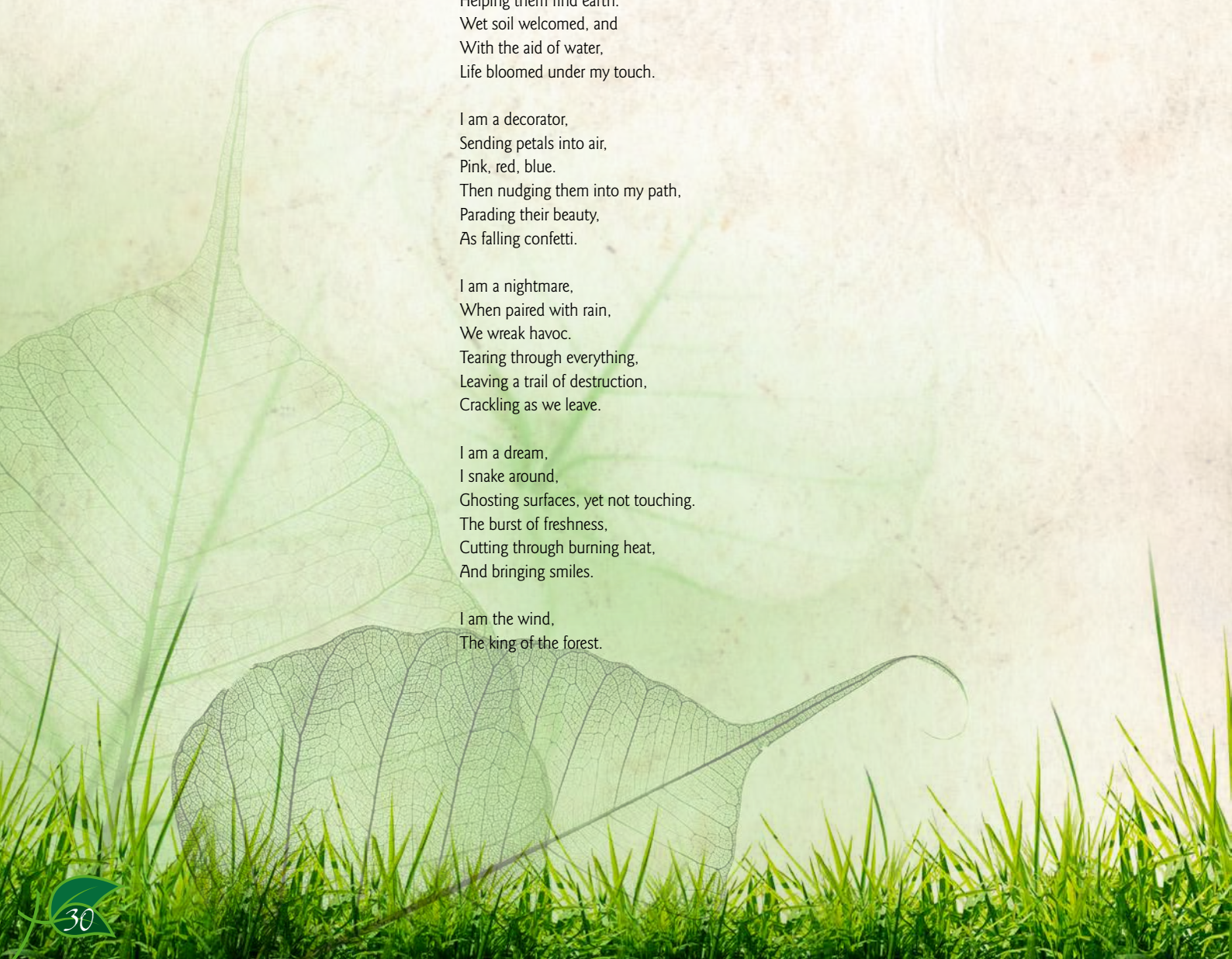
I am a creator,  
Lifting spores, seeds,  
Helping them find earth.  
Wet soil welcomed, and  
With the aid of water,  
Life bloomed under my touch.

I am a decorator,  
Sending petals into air,  
Pink, red, blue.  
Then nudging them into my path,  
Parading their beauty,  
As falling confetti.

I am a nightmare,  
When paired with rain,  
We wreak havoc.  
Tearing through everything,  
Leaving a trail of destruction,  
Crackling as we leave.

I am a dream,  
I snake around,  
Ghosting surfaces, yet not touching.  
The burst of freshness,  
Cutting through burning heat,  
And bringing smiles.

I am the wind,  
The king of the forest.



# *Solitude in the Forest*



By Mahica Jain

Year 8 A

Close your eyes, sing to the night,  
Love the moment, before it fades away,  
Kiss the wind, hold the light,  
Fall into the river and let it carry you away.

Night moves on, day will fall,  
Love the sun and adore the stars,  
Gone is the wind, the rain clouds sleep,  
So stay awhile, night is still far.

Here, I stand. Time stands still,  
Leaves, like glitter, canopy the sun.  
Ground, is coarse, the sea is pale,  
I stand alone. The blue stream runs.

Climb the stones, stand up high,  
Watch the creek, and wave goodbye,  
The mist, the light, it fades away,  
And through the leaves I salute the sky.

Scar the stones. Walk the dirt,  
Footprints along the side of the creek,  
And raise your chin. To the day,  
Search for the peace in the world you seek.

Here I stand. Time stands still.  
Leaves, like glitter, canopy the sun.  
Ground, is coarse the sea is pale.  
I stand alone. The blue stream runs.

