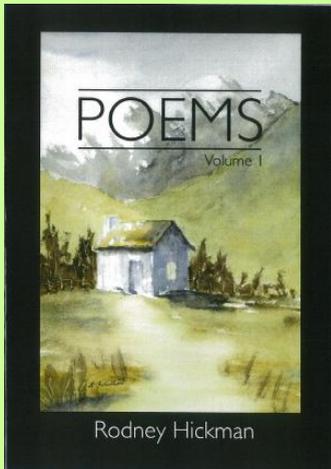


THE CHRISTIAN WRITER



MAGAZINE OF THE CHRISTIAN WRITERS
GUILD NEW ZEALAND

December 2013 – January 2014



Supporting
Members' Books

POEMS
Volume One

by Rodney Hickman



Have a blessed Christmas

Rightly explaining the word of truth – 2 Timothy 2:15

(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)



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The Christian Writer is published bimonthly by the New Zealand Christian Writers Guild and distributed to all its members. Contributions on the theme of writing are always welcome. If you have some advice or encouragement for Christian writers, or an announcement of some event of interest to Guild members, do send it to the editor (in 500 words or less) for consideration. Please note that hard copy manuscripts cannot be returned unless a self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed.

The editor reserves the right to condense and / or edit any contributions for reason of space. Ideas and opinions will not be edited, but editing of a technical nature may occur to maintain the highest quality of writing possible.

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The views and opinions of authors expressed in this magazine do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

Website:

The site provides useful information on the Magazine, Links, Writing Courses, Groups, Competitions, Workshops and the Library. It also has an interesting 'Current News and Views' blog site, as well as a 'Write to Us' page to inform the committee on matters of interest, or to make recommendations which will benefit the Guild and its members.

www.nzchristianwritersguild.co.nz

From the President



Welcome to our last magazine for 2013. This year has certainly flown. I enjoyed attending the combined dinner for the two writers' groups that Janice

Gillgren leads in Whangarei. These Northland Groups plan to hold a workshop next year for their 25th Anniversary. This will probably be on the 26th April.

Other dates for 2014 are as follows – Autumn Workshop on 22nd March, Tauranga Workshop on 12th July and Spring Workshop on 6th September.

I would like to especially thank Debbie for the many hours she puts into the magazine. It's looking great Debbie. We really appreciate the work you do and also the proof readers, Janet Pointon and Ruth Linton. Thanks also to Janice Gillgren and Janet Pointon for looking after the website, and to Jan Pendergrast for all the work she does.

Congratulations to competition winners for 2013. We appreciate the effort you make to enter competitions regularly. Special congratulations to the winners of our new 'Under 30' competition. Prizes for 2014 will remain at \$60 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$40 for third place over the year.

Thank you to Vicky, Debbie, Janice and Julie for marking these competitions for 2013. Ruth Linton will again be judging Level Three in 2014.

Do remember the anthology that we published this year. Copies are available from Jan Pendergrast and would make great gifts for Christmas.

Janette Busch of Christchurch has kindly agreed to be our South Island representative on the Committee. Thank you, Janette.

We have been enjoying having our son Wayne, his wife, Lynley and Zac staying next door. Wayne has been busy helping us on the oyster farm since their return from the Waikato at the end of October.

Recently I attended a writers' meeting where I was greatly encouraged by the devotion that was given. Later another person contributed from a very negative perspective. I must admit I found what that person had to say was extremely discouraging. Although there are times when we do need to address error, where possible it is wonderful to write to bless. Paul would say, 'whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things (Philippians 4:8).

May you all enjoy a truly blessed Christmas.

Janet Fleming



Announcing CWG 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place Competition Winners for 2013

LEVEL ONE

1st Place

Elaine Given

2nd Place

Judith Powell

3rd Place

Susan Flanagan

LEVEL TWO

1st Place

Vicki Nogaj

2nd Place

Heather Vincent

3rd Place

Yvonne Macdonald

LEVEL THREE

1st Place

Julia Martin

2nd Place Equal

Carol Duffy & Lesley Edgeler

UNDER 30S

1st Place Equal

Melanie Aitken & Lily Coles

2nd Place

Sophie Smithies

3rd Place

Bonnie Smithies

Congratulations to all prize winners. Elaine Given and Judith Powell will now move up to Level Two, while Vicki Nogaj and Heather Vincent will move up to Level Three.

Do be encouraged to enter the 2014 competitions. Overall winners for the year in each level receive \$60 for 1st Place, \$50 for 2nd Place and \$40 for 3rd Place. Although this generally only applies to members who have competed in most of the competitions in their particular level for the year, Melanie Aitken and Lily Coles will also be awarded a prize for doing so well in the newly launched Under 30s competition.

Taking the Controversy out of Xmas

While some believe the abbreviation ‘Xmas’ is an attempt to keep the Christ out of ‘Christmas’, the true origins have a strong basis in Christianity.

In the abbreviation, the X stands for the Greek letter Chi, which is the first letter of the Greek word for Christ. Jesus’ name has also been abbreviated as XP, a combination of the first and second letters of the Greek word for Christ. From XP comes the labarum, a holy symbol in Orthodox Christianity that represents Jesus.

The term ‘Xmas’ has been used since the 16th century, though it gained prominent usage in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the modern world, X has been taken to be used as an abbreviation for any word with Christ or the ‘krys’ sound in it—even in words which have no etymological connection. Chrysanthemum, for example, is sometimes shortened to ‘xant’, and crystal has sometimes been abbreviated as ‘xtal’.

*With acknowledgements to Jon Perry’s
‘10 Remarkable Origins of Common
Christmas Traditions’*

The Christian Fish Symbol

Christians have used the fish symbol — also known as the ichthys (ixthus, ictus)— since the first century. The word ‘ichthys’ means fish in Greek, but the letters are also the initials of five Greek words that mean ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour’.

Jesus Christ told His disciples in Matthew 4:19: ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ As the early

Christians followed Christ’s command to follow Him and lead others to the Lord, the fish symbol became a natural extension of Christ’s command and also a way to recognise and identify others who knew the symbol’s meaning. Even in English today we have words derived from this Greek word for fish — such as ichthyology, the study of fishes; ichthyoomy, the anatomy of fishes; ichthyofauna, the fish of a certain region; ichthyography, a written work about fishes.

The fish symbol is also similar in shape to the first letter of the Greek alphabet, alpha. In Revelation 22:13 Christ says, ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.’

Christians using the fish symbol were acknowledging that Christ was Alpha, the first. He was around at the beginning of creation (John 1:1 — ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...’).

In the early days of Christianity, and at other times throughout history, Christians were persecuted or put to death for following their faith and Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If they worshipped in secret places, a fish symbol outside the door was a way for other believers to know where they could worship and meet with other Christians.

Today, the fish symbol is used by Christians in business on their advertisements or signs. This simply identifies them to other Christians who usually feel comfortable dealing with other Christians.

*With acknowledgements to Creation Tips
website*

Virtual Writing: Making Use of Allegories, Metaphors and Similes

By Janice Gillgren

What is 'Virtual Writing', and how do you do it? According to my Oxford dictionary, 'virtual' in computer terms means: 'not physically existing as such, but made by software to appear to do so'. It comes from the word 'virtue', so even if it is not factual reality, it is true in effect. Playing a 'virtual' computer game means you are there in your imagination while not being there in actuality.

It took me a while to understand how that works. Once I got it, it made me appreciate this wonderful God-given attribute – the imagination – even more.

Virtual writing takes your readers to *your* world in *their* imaginations. This is not just the domain of the fantasy writer. It's what every writer wants to do, to some degree.

Among non-fiction genres, the writer may use imaginative techniques to help readers better understand difficult concepts. The writer of a biography wants readers to enter into the subject's world. The travel writer seeks to create a sense of place for the reader who has probably never visited there. Among fiction genres, imaginative techniques have plenty of potential uses, so I don't need to elaborate.

What are 'virtual writing' techniques?

The Allegory

is a story, play, poem, picture etc, in which the meaning is represented symbolically. An allegory is generally the purpose of the entire story or section

of writing. Jesus told many parables, which are allegories. An allegory is therefore different to the following figures of speech, which tend to be contained within only a sentence:

The Metaphor

describes something by using an analogy with something quite different. They are so much a part of our language that we don't even think about them anymore, and their misuse is a sign of a sloppy writer. But they can be a lot of fun, especially when you think up new ones that work really well.

'The Lord is my Shepherd' (Psalm 23) is a well-known and loved metaphorical statement. This Psalm demonstrates ways in which a good shepherd will look after his sheep – but unless you overlook the fact that you are not an actual woolly sheep, it won't mean as much to you.

Metaphors usually originate from an analogy someone made (such as saying we are 'human guinea pigs' – really?) which people found clever or useful, and began to use in common language. They can be overused of course, and old metaphors (i.e. clichés) should be 'put out to pasture' and left there.

Beware of mixing metaphors, such as: '*A fly in the ointment is a different kettle of fish.*'

The Simile

makes a direct comparison between two things that are not similar, and links them together with a preposition such

as ‘My love is like a red, red rose’ or ‘as sharp as a razor’.

To demonstrate the difference, a simile would be: ‘Telling an angry mob they need to demand their own rights is like adding fuel to a fire.’ A metaphor, by contrast, would be: ‘You’re adding fuel to the fire by telling that mob they should demand their own rights.’

I suspect many common metaphors started as similes, until people incorporated them into everyday use, and simply dropped the prepositions.

There are other figures of speech too, such as the hyperbole (deliberate overstatement); and its opposite, the Litote – but this article could get as dry as seaweed on a beach if I carry on, so I’ll stop here.

Allegories, metaphors and similes help your reader ‘see’ what you are describing by likening concepts or objects to something else that may be more familiar; or developing and expanding your descriptions to give the concepts or objects a greater meaning than what is usually attributed to them.

Used properly, they make your writing much more ‘virtual’.

NB: Definitions for Allegory, Simile and Metaphor have been derived from the Oxford dictionary.



CHRISTMAS

By Dianne Spain

C is for the Christ born as a baby

H for Herald Angels who did sing

R is for the Riches brought by Magi

I is for Immanuel our King.

S is for the Shepherds led to find him

T is for the Three Wise Men who came

M is for the Manger he was laid in

A for Adoration which they gave

S is for the Star that shone from heaven

Making known the birth of Jesus Christ

CHRISTMAS is a time when we remember

And celebrate that very special night.



How the Internet Came To Be

Author Unknown

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader by the name of Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot. And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg. Indeed, she was often called Amazon Dot Com.

And she said unto Abraham, her husband, "Why dost thou travel so far from town to town with thy goods when thou canst trade without ever leaving thy tent?"

Abraham did look at her as though she were several saddle bags short of a camel load, but simply said, "How, dear?"

And Dot replied, "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what you have for sale, and they will reply telling you who hath the best price. And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS).

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums. And the drums rang out and were an immediate success. Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever having to move from his tent. To prevent neighbouring countries from overhearing what the drums were saying, Dot devised a system that only she and the drummers knew. It was known as Must Send Drum Over Sound (MSDOS), and she also developed a language to transmit ideas and pictures – Hebrew To The People (HTTP).

And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading as doth the greedy horsefly take to camel dung. They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Sybarites, or NERDS.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were going to that enterprising drum dealer, Brother William of Gates, who bought off every drum maker in the land. And indeed did insist on drums to be made that would work only with Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

And Dot did say, "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others." And Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or eBay as it came to be known. He said, "We need a name that reflects what we are."

And Dot replied, "Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators." "YAHOO," said Abraham. And because it was Dot's idea, they named it YAHOO Dot Com.

Abraham's cousin, Joshua, being the young Gregarious Energetic Educated Kid (GEEK) that he was, soon started using Dot's drums to locate things around the countryside. It soon became known as God's Own Official Guide to Locating Everything (GOOGLE).

That is how it all began!



GET CREATIVE

Many thanks to Janis Cusack for her delightful poem. The picture I found to accompany the piece may not fit the description of an 'old' hat, but the expression on the cat's face is priceless.

A CAT'S OLD HAT

By Janis Cusack

The Cat in the Hat woke up yawning and felt like a spin.
So he got on his bike and pedalled to town,
all the way down to the square.

He sat with his cat mates and had a good chat.
He sized up the girl cats and tried to impress
by strutting his stuff while doffing his hat.
The girls were miaowing till Fat Cat, his rival,
arrived with a YOWL!
And the two of them promptly got
down to a spat.

The Cat in the Hat lost his hat to
the spat.
All crumpled and squishy, it was.
A tear in his eye for that famous
old hat, he hopped back on his
bike and rode home.
The Cat in the Hat came back
without his hat?
Now, how about that!



The next topic will be **Cobwebs Laden With Dew**

Maximum 40 lines for poetry and 250 words for prose.
Include the words 'Get Creative' with your submission. Although work is not
judged, the best pieces received will be considered for publication.

Email submissions to the editor no later than 10th January 2014

WRITING BRIEFS

Inspiring Christian writing of today and yesteryear—by Frederick Swallow



Michael Perry a highly regarded Anglican minister, editor, writer and composer compiled 300 hymns, including the Calypso Carol ‘See him lying on a bed of straw’. BBC Songs of Praise invited viewers to vote for their favourite carol. From thousands of votes the Calypso Carol was one of the top ten chosen at a 2005 Songs of Praise Christmas Concert, held at the Royal Albert hall, London.

Michael Perry also penned the carols ‘Come and Sing the

Christmas Story’ and ‘O God beyond all Praising’; helped rewrite Anglican chants to make them easier to understand and sing; edited the Bible Society *Dramatised Bible*; wrote hymns in *Singing to God*; and helped produce *Psalm Praise and Hymns for Today’s Church*. He chaired the Church of England’s Synod and led several churches as Rector and Vicar.

Sadly at 54, in 1996, Michael Perry – through a brain tumour – joined singers and writers in heaven.

Bibliography

Listen to the Calypso Carol on Google

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7Yukt2LiI8>

Library Corner

Book Review

By Debbie McDermott



POEMS Volume One

By Rodney Hickman

The most remarkable aspect of Rod's collection of poems is their variation and simplicity. Not only are they 'real' and easy to understand, they are also written with candour, warmth and, in many instances, with a good touch of humour and sensitivity.

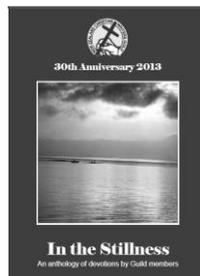
As is the case with many poets, Rod's inspiration to write poetry began with grief when his wife, Jenny, passed away in 2011 after 37 years of marriage. Rod says it is God who prompted him to begin writing poetry shortly thereafter and acknowledges that doing so has helped him greatly. Each poem has enabled him to take a step through the journey of grief and has led him into to a new future of purpose and hope.

As each poem in this volume is placed in the order in which Rod wrote it, I recommend they be read consecutively at the first reading, to better trace Rod's progressive journey through pain and sorrow and to see how God helped him.

It is Rod's desire that this collection of poems may be of help to other people going through hard times. With such a strong gospel message presented in many of the verses, I believe this inspiring book will not only help others but will also draw many to God.

If you wish to purchase your own copy of Rod's poems, please contact him direct on rodnev.hickman@primaryito.ac.nz

CWG 30th Anniversary Anthology



With Christmas coming up, *In the Stillness* is the perfect gift for family and friends.

Containing 41 devotions written by Guild members and a lovely photo on each page (several of which are in colour, including the photo on the cover), this anthology costs only \$10.00 ea (excl. postage)

To order and confirm post costs, email Jan Pendergrast on jan@roads-end.co.nz

Payments made by cheque can be posted to Jan at Seales Road, Oropi RD3, Tauranga

Or pay online to: NZ Christian Writers Guild, a/c No 12 3040 0547346 00

New Addition to the Library

Many thanks to George Bryant for donating a copy of his latest book:

Millennium 3 Unresolved Issues of our Time

(published by DayStar Books)

Only available for borrowing after it has been reviewed.

NOTICE

For those who are interested, a link to the Guild has been added to the brethren.org website.

We hope this will increase Christian public awareness of the Guild and lead to an increase in membership as a result.

Christmas Quiz

1. Who told Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem?
2. What form of transport did Mary use to get to Bethlehem?
3. Which Old Testament prophet had the most to say about the birth of Christ?
4. In the accounts announcing the birth of Christ, how many times did an angel or angels appear?
5. Who told Joseph the baby's name was to be Jesus?
6. Can you list five names of Jesus found in the Bible? (OT and NT)
7. What are the meanings of the names Jesus and Emmanuel?
8. When the shepherds went looking for Jesus, what was the sign they were to look for?
9. How many wise men or kings or magi came to see Jesus?
10. Two of the four Gospels do not mention the birth of Christ. Which two?

ANSWERS

1. Caesar Augustus. Luke 2:1 | 2. The Bible does not say | 3. Isaiah | 4. At least 3 | 5. An unnamed angel Matt 1:21 | 6. Refer to Isaiah 9:6 and Matt 1:21, 23 | 7. Saviour and God with us | 8. A baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger | 9. The Bible does not say | 10. Mark and John

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JANICE GILLGREN'S weekly blog

offering inspiration,
encouragement and useful tips for
writers at all levels.

www.wordsandscenes.co.nz

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Competition Results

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR COMPETITION ENTRANTS

With four competitions now instead of only three, only 1st and 2nd place winners will have their entry published. 3rd place winners and highly commended entries will be acknowledged.

Exceptions to this rule may occur (e.g. this issue's Level 3 results).

Under 30s Competition

Judge:
Vicki Nogaj

Requirement: COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT—'Life was simpler when...' and use it as the beginning of a short narrative piece. It should be written from the point of view of someone from your grandparent's generation. (500 words maximum.)

First Place



**Lily
Coles**
of Hastings

TOO MUCH?

"Life was simpler when we didn't have so much choice," Nana told me, leaning back into her rocking chair and smiling gently.

"Why's that?" I ask, my eyebrows knitting together, in a confused expression.

"Because with all the technology you young ones have these days, more choice makes people greedy."

I slip my phone into my pocket, no longer fixed to the screen, instead wanting to listen.

"I remember when I was your age. When it was raining we didn't have the option to

play on computers, watch TV, or text our friends. We had to walk to their house, play games to keep ourselves occupied, and find our own entertainment."

I smile, as she shows me the photos of her and other girls, their plaits entwined around their heads, as they sit on the lawn and play cards.

"So do you think technology, and all the different brands are bad?"

"No dear, technology is the creation of this century, without it we wouldn't know half the things we do now," Nana says, rocking back and forth in her chair. "What I mean is, it makes me sad when children use 'technology' all the time. There's so much of it that it replaces almost everything we used to do when I was a child."

"If you could change two things, what would they be?" I ask, reading the next question on my sheet, knowing her answers are perfect for my project.

"I would make technology less important, make us rely on it less and teach children some of the games we used to play in my day."

"You could teach me," I say, eagerly.

"Oh dear, I am much too old now. Besides you should use your imagination and invent your own games," Nana laughs.

"That way when some new and unknown technology comes into your generation with such a range that it overpowers

everything you used to do, you can keep the games going and save what you love.”

I write furiously, my pen scratching the paper of my book.

“Last question, then I’m done.” I say. “Would you rather have things the way they were when you were a child or the way they are with technology?”

“Neither. I’d rather know people want to change. Realise when technology is taking over, that they need a break from it, and go back to some of the old ways.”

Nana closes her her eyes as if the interview has tired her, her grey hair pressing into the chair.

Judge’s Comments

Congratulations Lily. I gave your entry first place. It was well set out and structured and had all relevant information (i.e. title, word count, name). However, because of the vast range of target ages (11 - 30 years) I would appreciate knowing your age, especially if under twenty. I loved that you chose to tackle dialogue as it is the best way to ‘show not tell’ the reader the intended message, which was clear and concise. It was nicely spaced and very well executed with point of view remaining clear despite, at times, not indicated in the piece. I enjoyed the natural progression and subtle ending that finished with a lovely visual. Well done and please keep writing! God bless. Vicki Nogaj.

Second Place



**Sophie
Smithies**
of Christchurch

No Title

“Life was simpler when I was a girl,” Grandma sighed. She was telling her grandchildren Xanthe and Xavier about her life as a young child. “Our family had no electronics, such as a TV, cell phones or even a computer,” Grandma continued. “In fact they are just recent things. In those days they hadn’t even been invented. We had no bathroom either.”

“Then what did you use for a toilet?” Xavier interrupted.

“Oh, we used an outhouse,” Grandma replied.

“But what is an outhouse?” little Xanthe questioned. Continuing her story Grandma explained that an outhouse was a small room away from the main house with a long-drop in it.

“The whole room stunk really bad, but every now and then someone would come around and empty the long-drop,” rambled Grandma. “Even names were much simpler in those days. At the school that I went to there were names like Peter and Jane, Lucy and Ann, Tom, Dick and Harry and Robert. But now I see complicated names everywhere just like your names. I have also noticed the difference between modern toys and the toys that I used to have to share with my brothers and sisters. Our family home was always neat and tidy because we had so few toys that even if all of them lay on the floor it would still look just as tidy for we only had three toys for all five of us to play with. There were two rag dolls made out of old stockings for the girls and the one handmade ball for the boys. So my Mother never had to pick any toys up off the floor. But the poor Mothers these

days have to pick up so many bits of cheap plastic of various toys that their children have left lying around. I really do not know how they cope with so much housework to do.”

“Now that Grandma has shared about when she was a girl, it is my turn to share about when I was a boy,” Grandpa added with a twinkle in his eye. “Well, it is very simple, I used to live in a paper bag on the road.”

Judge’s Comments

Hi Sophie, thank you for your entry. I thought you were brave tackling dialogue as it is quite a skill and a great way to portray a story. It is for this reason I chose to give you second place. Well done. The word count was a little low but you packed a lot of information into it. My suggestion is to break up Grandma’s monologue into smaller sections to make it easier to read. For example after “...brothers and sisters” I would start a new paragraph. Similarly after “...up off the floor.”

I loved the twist of humour at the end, but beware of introducing a new character in your conclusion. Grandpa can appear earlier on and still achieve the same effect at the end.

Overall, it was a cleverly thought out, great piece of writing for someone your age. In future, please remember to give your entry a title. Congratulations! Blessings, Vicki.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

A special commendation goes to 11-year-old Benjamin Smithies who did not get a placement but sent through a great little entry competing against the older children.

Level One

Judge:
Debbie McDermott

Requirement: DIALOGUE: —You have just reunited with someone you haven’t seen for a very long time, so you have plenty to say to each other. Recreate the scene with plenty of dialogue between you both. 400 words.

General Comments

Although all seven entries received for this competition were well written, I awarded Judith and Elaine 1st and 2nd place for presenting their pieces almost entirely in dialogue (85% and 74% respectively). They achieved this by weaving most of the necessary detail into the dialogue and keeping taglines to a minimum. This is what I wanted for this assignment, so well done.

When entering a competition, it is important to carefully read and ensure you fully understand the competition requirements. The wording for this assignment’s requirements inferred it needed to be written in the first person. Unfortunately, some of the entrants made the mistake of also writing from the other person’s point of view. While this was largely unnoticeable in most instances, it is nonetheless incorrect. When writing in the first person, you need to remember that you can observe what the other person does, but you are not able to get into their thoughts to know exactly how they feel. To give you an idea of what I mean, below are a couple of examples:

‘Doug thought for a moment....

Doug looked for safe ground....

While these sentences created a good atmosphere for the piece, they should’ve been written in the first person as follows:

‘Doug looked thoughtful.’

‘I could see Doug was looking for safer ground.’

Apart from the above, all entries were of a high standard and some had particularly good storylines. Well done to everyone who gave this competition a go.

First Place



**Judith
Powell**
of Oxford,
Canterbury

Old Friends Reconnected

“Snap!”

“What do you mean?” I frowned as Gill pointed at her head.

“Don’t you get it?” Gill laughed. “Neither of us dyes her hair. We’ve both gone grey!”

“I’m not grey. My streaks are white,” I protested. “White sounds more attractive. Anyway I’d rather spend money on shrubs than hair colouring.”

Gill looked around as we stood on the porch. “It’s worth it. The trees and shrubs have grown and I love the new lights. Everything’s changed since last time I came.”

“You’re so encouraging. I sometimes feel we’re stagnating and then you come and remind me of improvements we’ve made. My clever Don made the drive lights and archways a few years ago. Anyway, come in and have a cuppa and then we’ll look round the garden.”

“I’ve brought morning tea. Here! I bought them from the Dutch Bakery.”

I looked in the box. “Yummy! Cream buns! But I thought your last email said you were dieting?”

“This is tradition though. That’s different. We always had cream buns from that shop when I visited.”

“Gosh that was a long time ago; the children were still at home. At least we won’t have to share them this time! But tell me how you lost so much weight. You wrote something about the floods and every cloud having a silver lining.”

Gill answered as we waited for the jug to boil. “At work we had to shift every book from the downstairs library into upstairs rooms. It meant stacking them all on trolleys, pushing them into the lifts and unloading them all again. I lost kilos! Enough about floods though. You had wind. How did you get on? Everything looks fine.”

“We did lose some trees. A couple are still lying in the paddocks but Don and Jed have cleared most of them. Did you know Jed is living in the garage apartment temporarily?” I poured the drinks and we each took a bun. “What are your children doing now? Did you bring any photos?”

Gill was looking at our photos above the piano. “They’re all so grown up. Even your grandchildren aren’t little any more.” She pulled out her cell phone. “Here are my grandbabies and their mum.”

“Good! Show me! Tell me everything! I want to know everything that’s been happening since we last met. It’s such a treat for us to sit together and chat.”

Judge’s Comments

Out of all the entries received, Judith’s has the most natural feel to it. She begins the dialogue without any preamble or introduction, and avoids giving the reader any unnecessary detail at any time. Most of the

storyline—which is relevant to what has been happening in New Zealand weather-wise—is within the dialogue itself, which comprises 85% of her entry. Not only has this enabled Judith to keep within the word count, the whole piece also comes across as the sort of conversation one would expect to hear between old friends who have not seen one another in a long time.

Judith has also written solely in the first person and without leaving the reader in any doubt as to who is speaking. Her grammar and punctuation is excellent. The only recommendation I have is for the third sentence in the last paragraph to be changed to ‘I want to know what’s been happening...’ to avoid using the word ‘everything’ in two consecutive sentences.

Overall, Judith met the requirements of this assignment exceptionally well. Good work, Judith, and do keep writing.

Second Place



Elaine Given
of Hamilton

Forty Years On

“Remember those goats? That was the last time we were together.”

I had just met Jill off the train. I grabbed her for a long hug, then we walked up the steep path towards the car park.

I continued reminiscing:

“Tea was over and we were walking home in the dark. All of a sudden, I shrieked. Pale creatures with eyes glinting in our lamplight moved upwards in the dark. Those goats were almost the death of me. You didn’t make a sound.”

“No. But the hair on the back of my neck stood on end,” Jill remarked

“They did look like some phantom-like creatures, didn’t they. I’m sure my hair started turning grey that night! By the way, your hair is still as lovely as I remember it. How do you do it?”

“Good genes I guess,” was Jill’s comment. “I remember that your mother didn’t start turning grey till well into her seventies.”

“I must take after my father. He was white before he turned fifty.

I thought of taking you to my favourite coffee shop before we go to my house, unless you’d rather go straight home with me. I’ve cut back on coffee lately but I do enjoy a treat now and again.”

“Actually, if you wouldn’t mind, could we go to your place so I can freshen up a bit?” asked Jill.

“Of course. It takes about ten minutes to reach our place. What have you been doing with yourself since we last met? It’s been such a long time!”

“Like I said in my last email, we’ve just moved to a little farmlet in Canterbury. I’ve decided to breed rare poultry because I’ve always liked hens.”

“Don’t the northwesterners blow them away?” I asked with a giggle.

“We keep them tied to the clothes line. No. Not really.” Jill and I both giggled at the mental picture this conjured up. We also have pigs, but definitely no goats!”

Jill turned her eyes off the road ahead to ask me,

“What’s your project for the next forty years?”

“Forty years! That would make us ninety-five! I can’t imagine it. I would like to make a real go of writing. I’ve typed a few bits and pieces but mostly I just write birthday cards. Personally, I like doing things with people like you.”

I flicked on the indicator and drove in to our drive.

“Well, here we are.”

Judge’s Comments

‘Forty Years On’ is another good entry comprised of 74% of dialogue. Had Elaine avoided giving unnecessary detail (such as meeting her friend at the train station, or Jill taking her eyes off the road, etc), this ratio would have been even higher. There are also a couple of instances when taglines could have been reduced to only two words. While taglines are required from time to time to show the reader who is speaking, they should be kept as brief as possible. e.g. ‘was Jill’s comment’ and ‘I asked with a giggle’ could have been written as ‘Jill commented’ and ‘I giggled’. NB: Although it is impossible to talk and giggle at the same time, the spoken sentence was concluded with a question mark which indicates Elaine had already finished speaking. Had this tagline been used in another context, the spoken sentence would end with a full stop or exclamation mark.

Like Judith’s entry, Elaine’s is written entirely in the first person, as well as in a natural and credible manner that I thoroughly enjoyed. It also has a rather unusual and graphic beginning that hooked me in right from the start. Her grammar and punctuation are generally very good, with only a few minor mistakes needing correction, as well as one recommendation. They are:

- Para 6—there s/b a question mark after ‘...didn’t they?’

- Para 9 should begin with opening speech marks.
- Para 14—I recommend putting the phrases ‘No. Not really’ at the beginning of the paragraph.
- Para 16 should be on the same line as para 15.

Apart from this, Elaine met the requirements of the competition very well. Good work, Elaine. Keep it up.

Highly Commended

Well done to Eion Field for achieving 3rd place, as well as to Melanie Mason and Keith Willis for achieving 4th place equal. With only one point difference separating 3rd and 4th place, the three of you did very well.

Level Two

**Judge:
Janice Gillgren**

Requirement: CHRISTMAS— Write a love story (parent-child or man-woman) that starts with or is based on a Christmas event. About 500 words.

General Comments

There were only three entries this time. I had expected I might have some more entries from romantically inclined CWG members.

‘For Love’s sake’ by Heather definitely deserved first place. Emotive language, with excellent use of dialogue, really made me feel as if I was right there with Joseph and Mary.

I had not specifically stated whether or not the stories should be based on Biblical

characters, so the fact that Mary and Joseph were the main characters is not the reason for Heather's story gaining 1st place.

Grammar, punctuation, spelling and word count were good, especially in the first two entries

First Place



**Heather
Vincent**
of Matua,
Tauranga

For Love's Sake

Far from her hometown and loved ones and about to give birth to her first child, Mary's body ached with weariness. She dreaded the thought of another night on the road. How she wished she was back home with her mother nearby to assist in her confinement.

Still stinging with the remembrance of the unkind, condemning looks and comments from the townspeople as soon as she'd started to show, Mary wondered again about the child she was carrying. So many mysteries, so many unanswered questions.

Just then, Joseph reached out his hand to steady her as the donkey stumbled over the stones on the road.

"Nearly there," he assured her with a smile. "Bethlehem's just ahead. Someone will take us in – even if it's only a barn."

"O, Joseph," Mary choked back the tears,

"I don't think I can go through with this. It's all too much."

Joseph understood. He too had been visited by an angel one night nine months before.

"Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife," he was told. "For the child she carries is God's son, your Messiah. Take her and love her and the child for Me."

He had not forgotten, but gently and humbly cared for her all through the long months of pregnancy. He'd married her - never turning his back on her for a moment, faithfully standing by her side, no matter what the gossips whispered.

The lights of Bethlehem welcomed them at the end of their journey from Nazareth, and Mary's heart lifted as they drew near an inn.

"Sorry folks, I'm full," the innkeeper spread his hands to indicate there were no rooms left.

On they trudged, fruitlessly knocking - their hopes fading as the hour grew late.

"Sorry lady," another innkeeper spoke kindly. He could see Mary's burden of distress, but he too had no rooms to let.

As they turned to go he remembered.

"Wait, there's the stable out the back - if somewhat smelly," he chuckled. "You can bed down there if you like."

Gratefully Joseph accepted the kind offer, and led the weary Mary into the stable. She dismounted the donkey and watched Joseph gathering up the cleanest straw to make a comfortable bed.

"Here Mary, you can rest while I make a cradle from this feeding trough."

Mary gazed at her husband in awe. She thought of how much he loved her, cherishing her as if she was an alabaster jar, carrying precious ointment. Now at the point of delivery, he was there.

“Thanks Joseph, I love you so much,” Mary whispered.

Joseph kissed her tenderly as they lay down. How wonderful to know that the same God, the same angel, had brought them together, appeared to them personally and guided them safely on their journey.

When morning dawned Mary lay resting, her new born son peacefully sleeping in the manger. Joseph smiled contentedly. He felt richly blessed, filled with an overwhelming love for the family God had given him, and the knowledge that he'd been obedient to God's call.

Judge's Comments

Hi Heather. This is beautifully written, and deserves 1st place as awarded.

Technicalities such as spelling, grammar and punctuation are all good – but what really made this article shine was your excellent use of dialogue and emotive speech. You have used strong and clear active verbs, such as assured, welcomed, trudged, cherishing.

Your introduction starts at the right place – though perhaps would be better with less narrative – and your flashback isn't too long. Your conclusion, though also in narrative, seems to peacefully wrap up the story.

There are three paragraphs that I think should be merged with the one before, because the speaker is named, but then the speech is in the following paragraph.

For example:

- *'Nearly there...' should follow the previous paragraph where Joseph is named.*
- *'Don't be afraid to take Mary...' should be added on to the one before it, as the speech is from the angel mentioned in that preceding paragraph.*
- *'Wait, there's the stable...' is spoken by the innkeeper, and these two paragraphs combined could be added on to the one previous as well, which then ties in his two speeches.*

'New born', in the last paragraph, should also be one word.

Also – 'Someone will take us in – even if it's only a barn' has conflicting pronouns, ('someone', and 'it'), as I'm sure you can see now I've isolated them.

Well done for a great story.

Second Place



Jean Shewan
of Christchurch

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

“Wake up Johnny. It's time to go!”

His Mum's gentle voice seemed to come from a long way away. It was still dark but flashing coloured fairy lights and the sound of bells reminded him. It was Christmas Eve and now he was six years old he was allowed to go the adults Church service in the middle of the night.

The candlelit church, filled with gold and white flowers and the strong perfume of

lilies, was awesome. Johnny could only stare round as his family - except his Dad of course - found somewhere to sit. He knew what was going to happen, and he was especially looking forward to the part where they would pray. He had been learning so much about giving and prayer, so, although he had brought his Mum a special present with his pocket money, he wanted to ask God for something really special for her. That it would be a special present for him as well, was the only thing that made him wonder if God would listen to him. But his Mum had been so unhappy lately and the whole family needed this. Anyway, it wasn't a present he was asking for; more like a favour so that had to count for something.

At last the service started and Johnny joined in where he could. Some of the parts seemed to last much longer than usual and, by the time it came to the prayers, he was getting sleepy. Could he still remember the words that he had practised or would he get them all muddled? Quietly, under his breath, he started to talk.

"Please God, let Daddy come home today! You know all about me so I won't tell you all the reasons only that he has been away - wherever that is -for such a long time. Mummy has been so sad."

Johnny didn't remember much more about the service. He woke up in his own bed to bright sunlight and, when he went into the lounge, the rest of the family were sitting in there surrounded by brightly wrapped presents. There was no sign of his Dad though. Every time the doorbell rang Johnny looked up hopefully but even the arrival of Grandma and Grandad from Auckland couldn't make up for his

disappointment. Finally it was bedtime. He thanked everyone for his presents then gave his Mum an extra big hug and allowed her to kiss him.

"Haven't you enjoyed your day Johnny?" His mum asked him. "You look rather unhappy."

"I asked God to send Daddy home to us but he hasn't come. I know you would be much happier if he was here."

At that moment the door flew open and in walked Johnny's Dad, still in uniform but with the biggest smile Johnny had ever seen, His first words were,

"I'm home for good. Now we will all be together as a happy family."

In amongst all the noise and tears, Johnny only just remembered to whisper a quiet, "Thank you. God"

Judge's Comments

Hi Jean. You've earned 2nd place for your entry. I liked your simple storyline and great sense of anticipation on little Johnny's part, as he waited through Christmas day. Your story has reasonably good focus. It starts with a sentence that invites a question (Go where?), and has a satisfying conclusion. There are some ways you could definitely improve it though.

- *Although the childish talk in the 2nd paragraph is appropriate, and some description of place is a good idea, there is too much talk of what happens in the church, and Johnny's wish for a special present; leaving less room for you to explain the background of the story - and why Johnny is so keen for his father to come home. It's not until the end that we find out his father has been away, presumably with one of the Armed Forces.*

- *The 2nd paragraph is much too long, and could be broken up at the start of the sentence: 'He had been learning so much...'*
- *Also in the 2nd paragraph, a comma isn't needed after '...a special present for him as well...'*
- *Concerning the 5th paragraph, I'm not sure if you meant for the speech by Johnny to be included with it, or you've not included the spacing by mistake. They should be separate paragraphs, though, because there are two different speakers. Each time a different person speaks, start a new paragraph.*
- *There are a few minor problems with spacing toward the end of the story which should be picked up by whichever computer Word program you use.*

Although this is a parent-child story, and there is definitely love involved, I felt that this didn't quite fit the competition's criteria as it was more a story that happened at Christmas time rather than being based on a Christmas event.

Commendation

Well done to Yvonne Macdonald for achieving 3rd place in this competition and for competing regularly throughout the year.

Level Three

Judge:
Julie Belding

Requirement: ARTICLE— Write a 600-word article for a mothers' magazine on Surviving the School Holidays on a Budget. (Assume a family with three children of primary school age.)

General Comments

Some highly useful and creative articles came in, and as always, not much separated the winning entries in terms of quality. All of the ideas presented would be helpful to a busy mother. So the judging was done not so much on the content but on how well it was presented. Organisation is the key to writing an article of this kind. It needs to be well planned, and the points presented in a logical order, or grouped under headings, for easier reading. That said, if you are going to use headings the professional way is to place them in bold, rather than underlining them. (As an aside, if you discover a book with underlined headings, it's almost certainly been self-published!)

Highly Commended



Cynthia David

of Titirangi,
Auckland

Although Cindy is highly commended for achieving first place, she was not eligible to enter at this level. This is unfortunate as it means her entry will not be published.

NB: Do check the competition reference sheet (sent to you with the December issue of the magazine) to see what level you are on prior to entering a competition. If you are a new member, email Jan Pendergrast at jan@roadsend.co.nz and she will advise you. In a nutshell, all members need to progress through Levels One and Two before proceeding to Level Three.

If you feel your writing is of a high standard, you can fast-track to Level Three by sending samples of your writing in three different genres, to Ruth Linton at noru@woosh.co.nz or to Janet Fleming at mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz for assessment.

Second Place



**Pat
Kerr**
of Roxburgh,
Otago

Surviving School Holidays on a Budget

Think outside the SQUARE. Think aROUND the problem.

School holidays come four times a year, plus at Easter, Labour Weekend, Waitangi Day, and provincial days off.

So, what to do? No money, transport, expensive equipment but... lots of imagination and enthusiasm to do something different.

AROUND the house:

- Break the rules. Bed time becomes camping time (in the lounge, one big bedroom, garage or shed) The tent is the sheet...you get the picture!
- Meals. Eat when hungry. Have some hidden treats. Have “High Tea” or Party. Choose a colour theme for your meal (Warning: green mashed potato does not go down well!) Use the BBQ. Let the children cook/bake under supervision.
- Bath time. Let them use your en suite (just kidding!). Use the garden hose, slippery slope and old clothes to make memories. Dip in the nearest creek/pond/river/swimming pool/sea.
- Clothes. Let them raid your wardrobe (supervised). Have bags full of Thrift Shop bargains: Let them dress up and

wear the clothes all day. Hats, braces, high heels. bras...make laughs and history lessons! Musical chairs can become musical clothes bag. The music stops and an item is taken out and put on. Hilarious..

- Playtime: Invite a friend for each child over for the day. Put in separate areas of the property. Let the fun begin. (Co-ordinate a reciprocal day with the parents for respite!)

AROUND the neighbourhood.

- Have your children bake, walk the dog, clean the car or whatever for a neighbour or relative.
- Equip the children with pointed sticks, latex gloves and black bags. Take them around their bedroom, the garage or the yard (just kidding) as a practice for trawling along the street. waterway, or park picking up rubbish. Follow this up with a visit to the Wastebusters/Recycling Plant. This is a wonderful educational experience not a trip to the gull and rat infested tip of old.
- Favourite Places Picnic/Tour. Over time have the children collate pictures/drawings/brochures of their favourite places to visit in your area. Paste these on cards and store upright in a box. Draw out a card each. Co-ordinate visits for these holidays. Take home-made picnic fare, or use a special purpose fund (swear-jar collection?) The zoo, museum, park, beach...

AROUND the family.

- (Some liaison may be required beforehand)
- Have the children each choose a relation to phone, Skype, email, text or

visit if nearby.

- Create/reorganise photo albums
- Discuss family trees.
- Plan overnight or day visits.

AROUND the world.

- Scavenger Hunts are fun. Choose a country. Use magazines/newspapers/ internet and profile a country or race.
- Visit the library. Choose relevant books, CDs or DVDs for country of choice.
- Locate places on world map or globe.
- Make flags/kites/origami
- Invite a foreigner for a meal, or choose a takeaway that is different (Indian/ Chinese)
- Visit the museum/art gallery/ themed garden (Dunedin has a Chinese Garden)
- Dress up in foreign clothes for the day. eg kimono, wooden clogs.
- Speak in foreign language (or sign language) for the day. Start with easy words like greetings and variants of yes or no. Include customs- removing shoes outside, bowing, sitting on the floor, eyes lowered for example. Do study as a preliminary for this day. Use cue cards and labels made by the children.
- If you travel abroad, have the children study the culture first, use a map, and have some special features/places they want to explore. Have them keep a diary -priceless memories later.

Mum, get AROUND to preparing for the holidays. Collect clothes, cards, coins and candy now.

Judge's Comments

This is a nicely organised article, with good headings, but for an even more logical progression I'd suggest ordering the paragraphs as follows: around the family, around the house, around the neighbourhood and around the world. Also your first sentence would be better placed as your fourth sentence, after the word different, so that it leads directly to your following points.

Third Place



**Julia
Martin**
of Cambridge

Surviving the School Holidays on a Budget

iPods, iPads, iPhones, I scream ... “put those things away, they’re driving me crazy.”

From dawn ‘til dusk (if they’re allowed), many of our young ones today are mesmerised by the flashing colours, images, sounds and inane activities afforded by a multitude of digital gadgetry.

So with the school holidays approaching, how does one survive and retain sanity caring for a family of primary-aged children on a limited budget?

Here are some suggestions.

1. Plan ahead.
Before the holidays begin, draw up a programme with activities for

each day and start gathering up the materials and items you'll need. Don't just let the holidays happen. Develop a strategy with clear boundaries. Breakfast can be later than usual, but make sure everyone is up, dressed, with chores completed at the same time each day. This will help avoid lethargy and bad attitudes.

2. Get them outside.

Young people today generally spend far more time indoors than previous generations. "Children need wind round their britches" my mother used to say.

Reacquaint them with nature and the countryside. Go for walks or bike rides and take a picnic lunch. Organise a treasure hunt where they search for different items or landmarks. Teach them how to identify plants, trees, birds, or breeds of animals.

If the weather is suitable, set up a camp in the backyard and eat and sleep outdoors.

3. Teach them to cook.

Pretend they're young masterchefs and let them make simple things that they enjoy eating, such as pizza. They can make the bases and choose their own toppings.

Pikelets or pancakes can be made in an electric frypan with minimal mess.

Simple biscuit mixtures can be cut into shapes and decorated using their creative talents.

Let each child be responsible for

choosing and cooking an evening meal for the family. Developing their cooking skills and teaching them about food and healthy eating habits will have long term benefits.

4. Indoor activities.

If the weather is bad, have plans for the indoors. Bring out some board games which they may not have played for some time such as Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Trivial Pursuit. For older children there are old time favourites such as Draughts, Monopoly or Chess. Games and jigsaw puzzles are often cheap to buy in opp shops, so buy them in advance.

When energy levels drop, hire some movies and enjoy them with homemade popcorn.

5. Teach new skills.

Introduce some crafts (new to them) such as macramé, modelling with clay or plasticine, lino cutting, French knitting using cotton reels and nails, or real knitting with needles. Make simple objects out of wood such as a bird feeder for the garden.

The children may discover hidden talents and go on to develop hobbies from these creative activities. It might be an appropriate time to teach some life skills such as first aid, budgeting, or time management.

6. Visit local amenities such as the library, museum, art gallery.

These facilities are treasure troves and often provide free holiday activities for children.

7. Gardening.
Teach your children some gardening skills. Even if you don't have a proper garden, they can learn how to sow seeds and care for plants in pots and boxes.
8. Enjoy your children.
Have fun with them and try to view the holidays as a blessing and not a nuisance. Children grow up fast and when they've left home, the thing they'll most likely remember about their childhood is the quality time you spent **with** them, rather than the money you spent **on** them.

Judge's Comments

Another good, well-planned article, with useful numbering. But see my note at the beginning. Always use bold for headings, rather than underlining. Also, in your last para, use italics, rather than bold, for emphasis. Your first line is creative and arresting (well done!) but if I were editing it, I think I'd punctuate it like this:

"iPods, iPads, iPhones!" I scream.

"Put those things away. They're driving me crazy!"

MANY THANKS

Many thanks to Julie Belding for doing such a good job of setting the topics and judging Level Three entries this year.

Ruth Linton will be back in the saddle in 2014 and we look forward to her return.

Eternal Journey

By Chris Roe

As the crimson flame of life
Breaks slowly
Above the horizon,
The white, frosted meadows,
With trees and hedgerows
Of sculptured ice,
Speak loudly
Of your presence.

Once more
Upon this journey,
As another day begins,
Without effort
Or intrusion,
Through the peace
And tranquillity
Of your silent voice,
The moment becomes eternal,
And the journey
Begins again.



This poem, together with a few others, was sent to the Guild by Chris Roe of Norfolk, UK to share freely. For further details, go to Chris' website at

<http://www.silentflightpublications.co.uk/>

Competitions for February 2014

Due January 10th

EMAIL YOUR ENTRY AS AN ATTACHMENT, COMPLETE WITH WORD COUNT AND YOUR NAME.

Font: Times New Roman, 11 points. **Line spacing:** single

Spaces between Paragraphs: 6 points **Paragraph Indentation:** None

Please send a high resolution photo of yourself in the event you are awarded a place.

Level One—no age restrictions
Open to beginner writers or new members



*Debbie
McDermott*

REQUIREMENT: CREATIVE: Write a modern mystery story suitable for teenage boys or girls. Keep your sentences short and to the point. Also make sure your story has a strong and satisfying conclusion. Children don't like too many loose ends. 500 words.

Email entry to: Debbie McDermott at : sddp@xtra.co.nz

Level Two—no age restrictions
Only members promoted from Level One are eligible to enter



*Janice
Gillgren*

REQUIREMENT: Rewrite a Bible Story into a newspaper article as if it is a current event. You may use some poetic licence to fill in extra details. It needs to be written with excitement. 300-350 words.

Email entry to: Janice Gillgren at : mj_gillgren@ubernet.co.nz

Level Three—no age restrictions
Only members promoted from Level Two are eligible to enter



*Ruth
Linton*

REQUIREMENT: SHORT STORY: 'A merry heart does good like a medicine', declares Proverbs 17:22. Retell a recent incident in your life, or your family's life, that illustrates this proverb. Maximum word count: 350 words.

Email entry to: Ruth Linton at : noru@woosh.co.nz

Under 30s—11-30 year age group
All members within this age group are eligible to enter, provided they do not enter at another level in the same month



*Vicki
Nogaj*

REQUIREMENT: Write a letter to someone you feel you need to spend more time with. 250 words. Include your age with your entry.

Email entry to: Vicki Nogaj at : nogaj@vodafone.co.nz