

# THE CHRISTIAN WRITER



MAGAZINE OF THE CHRISTIAN WRITERS  
GUILD NEW ZEALAND

February – March 2014



Supporting  
Members' Books

**MILLENNIUM 3**  
Unresolved Issues  
Of Our Time

---

by George Bryant

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

(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)



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Postal Address: 18 Matai Street, Waiuku 2123

**Annual Subscription:** Single \$30—Double \$35—Student \$10

*(under ten cents a day for adults and under three cents a day for students)*

**Membership, Subscriptions and Address Changes:**

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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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This issue was printed by:

PAUL KJOSS  
WEBSITE DESIGN / PRINTING  
SERVICES  
For All Your Printing  
Requirements

47 Taupo Quay, DX Mailbox 45  
Wanganui 4500  
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# THE CHRISTIAN WRITER

Feb – Mar 2014

VOL 32. No 1 / ISSN 1171 0098

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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](http://www.nzchristianwritersguild.co.nz)

## From the President

Hello, with this our first magazine for 2014. January has already slipped by.

We had a special time over Christmas and New Year with the family and other visitors. It's lovely to see the growth of the grandchildren and enjoy their development.

I was impressed recently when a young lady who has just become a Christian said to me, "The Bible is a series of love letters from God." She had only been a Christian for two months and had been living in a situation where reading God's Word was not encouraged.

Congratulations to Denis Shuker on the publication of his second children's book telling of the Riwaka Gang's adventures. Congratulations also to Lynne and Bob Mitchener on their book *Orama Reflections* and to

any other members who have recently had writing published.

Our next workshop is scheduled for 22nd March, when Justin St Vincent of Radio Rhema will speak on 'Publishing eBooks and Book Series' and 'Launching your Book with Marketing and Publicity'. Our second speaker will be Julia Martin. Her subject will be 'Tips for Better Writing'.

Do take time to enter the competitions. If you are unsure at what level you should enter please contact Jan on [jan@roads-end.co.nz](mailto:jan@roads-end.co.nz).

In 2014, which is 200 years since the gospel was first preached by Samuel Marsden in the Bay of Islands, may we also take time to share God's love letters.

Janet Fleming



*Janet and her family over the festive season.*

**NZ Christian**



**Writers Guild**

## Autumn Workshop

**to be held on Saturday, 22nd March 2014**

**9:30am – 4:00pm**

at Rossgrove Chapel, 12 Rossgrove Terrace,  
Mount Albert, Auckland

**Morning Speaker: Justin St Vincent**

—Director and Founder of Xtreme Music Ltd, Sales Account Manager at Rhema Media Inc, and Advisor at The Fetzer Institute of Radio Rhema will be speaking on:



**Publishing eBooks and Book Series**

and '**Launching your Book with Marketing and Publicity**'



**Afternoon Speaker: Julia Martin**

—long-time member of the Guild and winner of many writing competitions will be speaking on:

**Tips for Better Writing**

If you are keen to further develop your writing skills, or are seeking to successfully publish and market your work digitally, we encourage you to come along.

**Cost: \$15.00 pp or \$25.00 for a couple**

*Don't forget to bring a packed lunch. Tea and coffee will be provided.*

**For more details contact:**

Janet Fleming, Box 115, Kaeo 0448

Tel: (09) 405 0126 / Email: [mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz)

or

Jan Pendergrast on Email: [jan@roads-end.co.nz](mailto:jan@roads-end.co.nz)

# Northland Christian Writers Group 25th Anniversary

The Northland Christian Writers group is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year!

Details are not yet complete, but we plan to hold this event on Saturday afternoon/evening of May 3rd.

If you have been involved in the group at all in the past and would like to join us—or would just like to come along—please get in touch so we can send you further details when they are finalised.

If you know of anyone else who you think may want to come and doesn't get the Guild magazine, please let them know too.

## Contact details

Janice Gillgren on (09) 433 9752 or  
[mj\\_gillgren@ubernet.co.nz](mailto:mj_gillgren@ubernet.co.nz).

*(NB: Please don't phone me between 14th Feb and 23rd March, as I will be away.)*

Jane Garrick on (09) 433 7197 or  
[garrix@ubernet.co.nz](mailto:garrix@ubernet.co.nz)

## The Significance of Our Names

By Deborah McDermott

*(with acknowledgements to Jason Dulle)*

We are probably all familiar with the cliché, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'. Admittedly, this is referring more to the sort of name-calling that so often happens in a heated argument. However, whether given on the spur of the moment or at birth, all names are significant because they give a person a designation that can either encourage or damage them, emotionally and mentally.

According to Jason Dulle, 'If one has a famous last name, they are treated with respect and honour. If they have a last name that has been associated with ill-repute, they will be disrespected and dishonoured'. He goes on to say, 'To the Hebrews a name was not a label, or a tool to distinguish one person from another; a person's name was viewed as equivalent to the person himself. A person's name signified their person, worth, character, reputation, authority, will, and ownership'.

This is particularly true of Jesus, Christ, whose name is equivalent to his person. Hence the reason the Lord says in John 14:13, 'Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it'. This means far more than just ending our prayers with 'in Jesus' name'. To pray in Jesus' name means to pray in accordance with his will, his character and his purpose as though he himself

was praying. Praying in his name gives us his authority to act on his behalf, and to fulfil his command to do even greater works than he did while on this earth. This is an extremely important aspect of our Christian faith.

So, if all names are significant, have you considered what your name means to you? As a child, I did not like my name very much, but shortly after becoming a Christian, I found out there was a Deborah in the Bible who had been one of Israel's most esteemed judges. As you can imagine, I felt quite gratified to bear the name of such an important person. Then a little later, I discovered there was another Deborah in the Bible, but she was a nursemaid. At that moment, God showed me he would use me to encourage and counsel others, just as Deborah the judge did, but I was to do it with the heart of a servant.

For the first time, I came to realise there is a prophetic significance to names that we often overlook. This was later confirmed, not only by a sermon on the subject but also by finding out that my maternal grandfather's surname means 'Passover'—the Old Testament foreshadow of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

So what about your name? Does it have a good or bad prophetic significance? If it is the latter, then as a Christian you need to remember you now bear the name above every other name—Christ, who has exchanged our curses for his blessings, love and grace. You are very precious to him.

## Five Steps to Keeping Your Resolutions

By Cindy David

As the new year unfolds, loved ones and friends from across the globe wish me a "Happy New Year". If only happiness would fall into my lap every time someone wished me that, I would have enough to last me for years.

Unfortunately, life doesn't work that way. I've learned happiness is more an outcome of what I do, rather than the result of a simple wish. It is a by-product of the time I invest in my relationships, the hard work I put into building a career or business, and the discipline I bring to my physical or financial fitness.

That's why if you intend 2014 to be a truly happy year, you must begin by asking yourself: What is it that I want to happen to make it a happy year? Then scribble down a list of goals which everyone calls 'New Year resolutions'.

I know it's not easy to find the time to make New Year resolutions, let alone keep them. Years of practice, though, have actually taught me five simple steps on how to create New Year resolutions and make them happen.

### **Step 1: Make a list of goals and pick the ones to focus on**

Write down as many goals as you want, then choose the ones to focus on this year. Considering all the other stuff in life you need to do, a year is hardly enough for all the great things you want to accomplish. So, it's best to choose to work on only a few goals, and to do them well.

## **Step 2: Create a ‘fulfillment plan’ for each goal**

Writing a list of goals without an action plan is an exercise in wishful thinking. When you decide to pursue a goal, you must write down the steps you need to carry out to achieve that goal. Then, after each task, set a day or time you must devote to carrying it out. It’s good to set a deadline too. Making your goals time-bound will keep you disciplined and focused.

## **Step 3: Anticipate the roadblocks and find ways to avoid them**

One of the most likely reasons people give up on their resolutions is because they can’t anticipate the roadblocks before they hit them. Some of these roadblocks could be your inability to manage your time, the temptation to do other stuff that you didn’t plan, distractions and over-commitment. Eliminate these roadblocks, remember what you want to get accomplished and keep your focus.

## **Step 4: Visualising the rewards**

The best way to get motivated is to keep in mind the benefits that come with accomplishing the goal. e.g. what do you get when you lose, say 20 kilos? You will look and feel better, get into a size 10 outfit again, and perhaps even confidently wear your togs for a summer outing.

## **Step 5: Take stock of your progress**

Always review your goals after a period of time and tick off the tasks you’ve done. Seeing how far you’ve gone can be very inspiring. I always look at my plan once every three months and if I’m not keeping up, I get reorganised and keep pressing on, bearing in mind that it’s not over until the year is over.

Happy is what you make it. One way to begin is to create your New Year resolutions and work hard at fulfilling them.

## **Finding Your Genre**

*With acknowledgements to  
Marg McAlister*

This week, I read a synopsis for a new book by a first-time author whose work I respect. His first book will be released shortly: a fast-paced thriller set in Asia. I am fairly confident that he will quickly develop a following.

He was keen to get started on a second book, and was thinking of trying a different genre – one he classified as a romantic comedy. However, when I read the synopsis, the tone didn’t telegraph ‘romance’, or ‘comedy’. To me, it was still a thriller – with one important difference: it had paranormal elements.

That changes things. A lot. There are plenty of readers who enjoy romantic comedies but aren’t the slightest bit interested in the paranormal world – if anything, it might turn them off. However, there is a wide and hungry readership for both paranormal romance and paranormal suspense. There are also paranormal romances with a humorous theme (quite a few of them) and some writers successfully blend humour and suspense.

What to do? The key, I feel, lies in understanding what feels right for you. Don’t try to force yourself into the strictures of a new genre if it’s not one you would read yourself, and not one that you really want to write. That’s a fast road to disappointment.

Remember that you have to sit down at the keyboard (or with your Dragon Naturally Speaking microphone) and live with your plot and characters every day. You can do that even if you’re not in the mood for writing, but not for an extended period. It’s much, much better to look forward to your work session every day.

## A FEW TIPS ON FINDING YOUR GENRE

1. **Write what you like to read.** Old advice, but tried and true. If you like to read it, then you have a firm understanding of the conventions of that genre. Because you're one of them, you know what readers want. You know the kinds of characters they like.

2. **The flip side of Point 1: you can't necessarily write well in the genre you like to read!** That's a shame, but it's not the end of the world. Example: you love police procedurals, but you haven't a clue how to find out the police background and you don't really want to do it anyway. My advice would be: stay away from police procedurals and write about an amateur sleuth. Amateurs might not have the resources of the police behind them, but they can (ahem) break the law in an effort to achieve their ends, and they can get into a whole lot of trouble. Great fun.

Bottom line: admit it to yourself if it's not going to work out, and find a genre that's related.

3. **Pick a 'baseline' genre and tweak it.** If you like writing thrillers and suspense, the writing world is your oyster. Every good page-turner has suspense in it anyway. You can classify your novel as 'suspense' and add elements of romance, magic, science fiction, mystery... see how it goes?

4. **Once you choose, start writing, see how it flows, and get some feedback on both your writing technique and your plot.** If you love it, chalk up a win and keep going. If your writing slows to a crawl and you lose enthusiasm, guess what? Yes, it's time to try something else! Quit while you're ahead, and find something you love to write. Once you do find a genre you like, you can write book after book, with your skills and understanding growing all the time.

5. **Evaluate before you decide to switch genre (especially if you've published only one book).** Give yourself time to build your fan base before you jump ship and try something else. You really need three books out before your fans will read one book and then start looking for other things you've written. If you have switched from mysteries to light romantic comedies, you might not have the same reader base. That being said, if you really want to try something else, go ahead. You might find that your second choice is the one that feels like exactly the right fit.

**Tip:** C J Lyons has a nifty way around this problem. She established a brand that she called 'Thrillers with Heart'. What does that mean? In her own words, interviewed in Write. Publish. Repeat. ([The No-Luck-Required Guide to Self-Publishing Success](#)) by Sean Platt and Johnny B. Truant, she explains: "...I realised what my brand was: *Thrillers with Heart*. In other words, my stories, no matter where in the thriller-suspense genre they fall, aren't about the fast-paced action or adrenaline rush, they're about ordinary people facing the worst day of their lives and finding the courage to stand up and become heroes. My stories explore the grey area between the black and white of good and evil. My brand, *Thrillers with Heart*, is the emotional promise I make to my readers. As long as I keep that promise, I can easily cross genre boundaries without disappointing my readers."

C J has a website filled with great info and encouragement for writers. You'll also get some great ideas about promotion of your work by spending some time on her site. You can find her here: <http://cjlyons.net/> and here: <http://www.norulesjustwrite.com/>

## Bartha Hill launches a new book



Some 40 well-wishers and relatives arrived at the Maori Hill Presbyterian Church on the afternoon of Sunday 17 November to see Dunedin writer, Bartha Hill, launch her latest book, *Teaching Hundreds to Heal Millions*.

The book is the biography of Dr Beryl Howie, a missionary doctor who served for 23 years in North India, at the Ludhiana Medical College and Hospital. She was a remarkable woman, who in 1978 had been awarded a Companion of the Queen's Service Order (QSO) for Public Services. Twenty-seven years later, at the age of 81, she received an honorary doctorate of science from Otago University.

Bartha herself is a former missionary to Indonesia, as well as a long-time member of the NZ Christian Writers Guild. She had known Beryl Howie for many years, but said at the launch that her biography very nearly missed the light of day. Most of her interviews with Dr Howie, who was living in Auckland in her retirement, were conducted by telephone, with only a few visits face to face. A few years ago, when the final draft was finished, Dr Howie told Bartha, to the latter's astonishment (and consternation) that she did not want the book published until after her death!

Anxious that the manuscript and research materials not be lost, Bartha

immediately deposited everything in the archives of Otago University for safekeeping. Earlier this year, when Dr Howie died at the age of 88, Bartha retrieved her manuscript, gave it a postscript, and sent it off to DayStar Books which had agreed to publish it.

*The book has been selling well, and is almost out of print already. For ordering information contact*  
[admin@daystarbooks.org](mailto:admin@daystarbooks.org).

## The What, Why and How of Blog Writing (part one)

By Janice Gillgren

### First of all—what is a blog?

To start with, there was 'logging the web' (a term coined in 1997); this was shortened to 'weblog', and this in turn was shortened to the now familiar word 'blog' in 1999.

As the number of blog sites has exploded enormously, their uses have also increased. From being mostly opinionated commentaries originally, or telling the world about personal experiences such as travels, they have also become increasingly used in the political and commercial world.

### What's the difference between a website and a blog?

I liken a website to a poster on a wall, and a blog to a notice board. The poster is there to gain attention and doesn't tend to change often; the notice board is there to tell everyone what is going on, and may be added to daily. Earlier notes are stacked away for reference.

A blog today is a page on a website – or an entire (usually small) website – devoted primarily to purposes such as:

- Recording thoughts, opinions, and events
- Activities and hobbies
- Links to other sites
- Updates on products available for sale.

A blog can cover a wide range of subjects, or have a very narrow focus. Like the word ‘google’, the word ‘blog’ is no longer just a noun, but is now a verb too. Each entry to a blog site is called a ‘post’, and it is best to do a new blog post regularly (at least weekly).

The most recent blog posts are seen on the top of the blog page, with previous ones appearing in reverse chronological order down the page, or archived.

Website developers such as Blogger and Wordpress have revolutionised blogging, because they have made it possible for would-be blog owners to develop their own blog websites for free. It’s still a time-consuming job to make your own website, but it’s getting easier all the time.

### **Secondly – why should you blog?**

If you are a writer, there are very good reasons why you should have your own blog website:

- To develop your writing skills with regular writing practice, on any subject(s) you are passionate about.
- To develop your confidence at publishing your work for the world to see. You become writer, editor and publisher – all in one!
- To showcase your writing ability to editors who may be interested in publishing your work. (You can also use a website to show scanned copies of published articles for the same reason.)
- To make some money selling items associated with your skill or interest area(s). If you sell other people’s products, this is called ‘affiliate

marketing’. It has become popular; though its success is very variable.

There are downsides to having your own blog, of course:

- Writing blogs and maintaining websites tend to both be time consuming.
- When you are working on another project, blogs can distract you.
- They need to be updated regularly, or readers will lose interest, and search engines won’t find them.
- While you can develop a reasonable site for free, hosting is a different matter. Freely hosted sites tend to look cheap, with a lot of unwanted advertisements that may not suit your site’s character, and they have limited options for outlay. Alternatively, paying for hosting allows you to have an individual site, but the costs vary a lot, depending on your requirements and what is available.

If you don’t want your own website, you can offer to write ‘guest blogs’ for other website owners, which can achieve good results but to a lesser degree.

Blogs have become surprisingly popular, and I think this is because most of them are potentially more interactive with the writer than most books or magazines would ever allow – and humans like to communicate with other humans, or at least know what they’re up to!

**Log Onto  
JANICE GILLGREN’S  
weekly blog**  
offering inspiration,  
encouragement and useful tips  
for writers at all levels.

[www.wordsandscenes.co.nz](http://www.wordsandscenes.co.nz)

# GET CREATIVE

Many thanks to Julia Martin and Ruth Jamieson for submitting two lovely pieces of creative poetry for this issue's Get Creative Section. After some consideration, I felt Julia's exquisite imagery best captures the topic, *Cobwebs Laden With Dew*.

## Dew Laden Cobwebs

By Julia Martin

Delicate cobwebs sway in the outdoor breeze

Inconspicuous, insignificant

Fragile gossamer with strength like steel

Night falls and dew descends

By dawn the webs are transformed

Naked doilies now drip with diamante splendour

Miniscule prisms disperse multi-coloured lights

That dazzle and glisten with elegance

In the morning sunlight

But wait! There's danger afoot

The wily web maker lurks in the shadows

Waiting for prey

Beguiled by the silken web's allurements

A careless insect is snared and entangled

In the sticky thread

The spider, like a ruthless predator

Stalks his victim and makes his move

With surgical precision he inflicts the paralysing sting

And death ensues.

Was ever a shroud more beautiful?

The next topic will be

## Dancing With the Wind

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 March 2014*

# THE PIG

By Rod Hickman



I owned a little piggy,  
he was a cutie and he  
was divine  
Rosy pink skin, loveable eyes  
and intelligent – plus he was mine  
He was so adorable,  
why he followed you everywhere  
Especially if you used a brush  
to scratch his growing hair

Like I said before  
he was lovely and he was divine  
But he was still a pig,  
and he grew into a swine  
I could not change his nature,  
he's still a pig I suppose  
Even when I placed a ring,  
there upon his nose

Did it ever occur to you,  
we too are like that pig  
No matter how you dress us up,  
it's to the mud we dig  
We need a heart transplant,  
it's our nature that is wrong  
If we change what's in our heart,  
we would sing a different song

So, I come to God, and ask  
Him to work on me  
Give me a heart like Jesus,  
it's what I want to see  
It's at Calvary's tree, is where the  
exchange takes place  
And my old repugnant ways,  
I no longer have to face.

## Warm Welcome to NEW MEMBERS

**Bob Mitchener**  
of Great Barrier Island

**Owen Pauling**  
of Te Puke

### Writing Courses Survey

Due to lack of response, in recent years, to the Guild's *Freelance Writing* and *Writing Your Family History* home study courses, the committee is asking members who would like to do a writing course to send an email to Janet Fleming at [mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz) and provide the following details on:

- The sort of course that would most appeal to you.
- What you would like that course to encompass.
- How much you would be willing to pay to cover the costs of tutoring, stationery, study guides and postage.

Many thanks.

### SPECIAL OFFER

Rod Hickman is offering a free copy of his first volume of poems to all Guild members. All you will need to pay is the cost of postage.

*If you would like to take Rod up on his offer, please contact him direct on [rodney.hickman@primarvito.ac.nz](mailto:rodney.hickman@primarvito.ac.nz)*

## WRITING BRIEFS

Inspiring Christian writing of today and yesteryear—by Frederick Swallow



### Cabinet Maker – Hymn Writer – Pastor

**Edward Mote** was a cabinet-maker apprentice in London. His parents kept a hotel. Sundays he played on the streets but never heard of God.

At 16 in the early 1800s, Edward Mote went to a Gospel service at Hampton Court Chapel with his cabinetmaker master and there became a Christian.

A successful craftsman, he built a Baptist church at Horsham, Sussex—now Reheboth Baptist Fellowship—and wrote the hymn, 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness'.

After 26 years of preaching, the congregation offered him the property deed in gratitude. He refused saying:

“I do not want the chapel: I only want the pulpit and when I cease to preach Christ, then turn me out of that.”

Today there is a memorial tablet on Rehoboth pulpit for Edward Mote:

‘... He preached Christ the Solid Rock, all the sinner needs and all the saint desires. Author of the hymn 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness'.’”

He met singers in heaven in 1874.

#### *Bibliography*

Reheboth Baptist Chapel. Google, *Cyber Hymnals, 5000 Hymns. '101 More Hymn Stories.'* Osbeck. (Kregel). Music, William Bradbury.

## Library Corner

### Book Review

By Debbie McDermott



### MILLENNIUM 3

Unresolved Issues  
Of Our Time

By George Bryant

Consisting in the main part of twelve well-written expository essays, *Millennium 3* is an insightful and thought-provoking book on issues such as PC, The Dying Family, Big Brother, Life and Death, and Racism—just to name a few. Each topic has been fully investigated and a bibliography of references provided at the end of the book.

George's ability to present all points of view on these chronic social problems with almost no personal bias is, I think, the most noteworthy aspect of this book. He has largely achieved this by discussing rather than providing possible solutions to these issues. This is vital when writing a book of this nature as it raises its potential to cross religious, political and cultural barriers, and thereby reach a far wider audience.

Although there is no Christian message in *Millennium 3*, George's emphasis on the third dimension (human spirit) is very clear in this quote from the final chapter: 'Neglect of the third dimension, the spiritual side of human beings, perpetuates social problems' (p.188). He then reviews the 'spiritual' aspects of the social issues described in the book, saying they need to first be addressed before any lasting resolution can be found.

All in all, *Millennium 3* is a worthy book I highly recommend to adults of all ages and persuasions. Well done, George.

To obtain your own copy, go to  
<http://www.daystarbooks.org/> or contact George  
Bryant on [bryantgw@xtra.co.nz](mailto:bryantgw@xtra.co.nz)

## New Library Addition

Many thanks to Guild Members Lynne and Bob Michener for donating their recently published book

### *Orama Reflections*

## CWG Writers' Groups

### AUCKLAND – WEST

Barbara Rabey

*(in the absence of Beth Walker who is in Christchurch attending to family matters)*

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# Competition Results

## Under 30s

**Judge:**  
**Vicki Nogaj**

### General Comments

*Unfortunately, no entries were received for this competition. However, it is to be noted that Lily Coles, who has competed and done very well at this level before, chose to enter the Level One competition instead. Go Lily!*

## Level One

**Judge:**  
**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.

### General Comments

*Although all four entries had an air of mystery or a 'surprise the reader factor', only Susan and Lily's can be classified as 'soft' mystery stories (i.e. where there is no threat to life), whereas Ruth and Eion's entries are thrillers. As no previous tutorials have been published on these particular genres, I have decided to accept both as being valid for this competition, as well as provide a bit of instruction at the same time.*

*Although mystery stories are similar in nature to suspense stories and thrillers, they are essentially quite different when analysed:*

**Mystery:** *The main character is occupied in*

*tracking down the truth about an event (usually a murder, but not necessarily). If the protagonist (the good guy) is in any danger, it is usually moderate, and becomes a problem only as the detective approaches the truth.*

**Thriller:** *the protagonist is in danger from the outset.*

**Suspense:** *the main character may become aware of danger only gradually. In a mystery, the reader is exposed to the same information as the detective, but in a suspense story, the reader is aware of things unknown to the protagonist. (i.e: The reader sees the bad guy plant the bomb, and then suffers the suspense of wondering when or if it will explode.)*

*All four entries were well written and a pleasure to read. However, I would like to particularly commend Lily Coles for entering at this level. For a young lady of only 14 years, she has done exceptionally well in competing against much older and more experienced writers, and therefore deserves to share First Place with Susan Flanagan. Hopefully, her participation will encourage other young writers to enter the competitions in the future.*

## First Place Equal



**Susan  
Flanagan**  
of Paihia

## Sweet Mystery

*Poppy paused pen in hand at her desk. Her Mother was calling her from the*

kitchen. She dropped her pen, closed her diary and went to see her Mum. She found her starting to make a batch of her favourite strawberry jam tarts. "Can you give me a hand please Pop?" "Sure thing Mum." Together they measured, mixed and made pastry cases and strawberry filling. Then while the tarts baked and cooled, Poppy and her Mum sat down to share a sweet treat and catch up. After that there were dishes to be done, dinner to be prepared and eaten, and more dishes. By the time the family had played a few games together it was time for bed.

The next morning being Sunday, Poppy barely had time to eat breakfast before heading to church. On their return she ran straight upstairs to her room and her desk. She had news to write in her diary! Her friend Emily had been asked on a date by a new boy at church! Poppy's emotions felt a bit like a strawberry jam filling. There was happiness for her friend. Envy that she was not the invited girl. Anxiety that she was not even ready to go on a date. The mixture was not sweet and she wanted to put down her thoughts in her diary and get it all in perspective. She sat down at her desk and reached for the key to unlock the diary but it was not there! The diary was there. The key was not. Help! She tried to remember what had happened the day before. She searched every room in the house. She went through the pockets of everything she had worn including the kitchen apron. No key. What was

worse? Having an unlocked diary anybody could read? Or a locked diary you can't write in?

Poppy felt like crying. She knew she shouldn't be this upset over a little key but she couldn't help it. It was the last straw. She sat on her bed. At that moment the Holy Spirit nudged her inside. "Pray Poppy". Poppy prayed for Emily. She prayed for the new boy. She prayed for her own heart. And then she prayed for the lost key. She felt much better after that.

Poppy was heading downstairs to phone Emily to see how she was when she heard a yell. She raced downstairs and heard voices and laughter in the kitchen. On entering the kitchen she found her Mum, and her little brother Peter drinking a large glass of milk. "What's happened?" asked Poppy. "Peter got more than he bargained for in his strawberry tart Poppy. Have you lost something?" Her Mum held up a sticky red key for Poppy to see. "It's almost the same colour as your face Pop" said Peter. "You're lucky I didn't swallow it because I sure wouldn't have gone looking for it!"

### **Judge's Comments**

*Not only is Susan's story creative, it also has a high level of credibility (says I who once accidentally cooked up a green scourer with the spinach!). She has chosen words and expressions that a young teenage girl can easily understand and relate to. When writing for children, it is important to avoid using complicated or outdated language which they may find boring or difficult to understand, and Susan has achieved this very well.*

*Flow, grammar and punctuation are excellent. However, Susan's paragraphs are a bit long for the younger reader. I recommend splitting the second paragraph in two by inserting a paragraph break before 'She sat down at her desk....' As Poppy gets into a panic from this point on, it is also an excellent place to begin a new paragraph.*

*Towards the beginning of the piece, as well as in the final paragraph, the dialogue of the different speakers should be in separate paragraphs. Not only does this add to the story's readability and impact, it is also now standard practice.*

*The only other corrections are as follows:*

- *Mum should be in lower case, unless it is used as a name; i.e. "Hello Mum".*
- *Paragraph 2 – sentence 9: I recommend changing 'in perspective' to 'into perspective' which reads better.*
- *Final paragraph – there should be a comma before the closing speech marks in "It's almost the same colour as your face Pop," said Peter.*

*This is otherwise an excellent story. Well done, Susan, and do keep writing.*

## **First Place Equal**



**Lily  
Coles**  
of Hastings

### **A NEW HOPE**

Seven years ago, Sarah Shears passed away...

Since her death, Mr and Mrs Shears' once enlightened faces were now permanently dark and sunken. Large shadows hung beneath their sad blue eyes, which looked as though the sun had set and hidden itself in the clouds, behind their pupils.

Occasionally Mrs Shears would pull a photo album from the shelf, brushing off the dust which had embedded itself to the cover and almost everything else in the house. But when she saw the photos of Sarah as a small girl, her hair in two braids falling from her head, she began retracing the memories of that fatal car crash.

Since they had adopted and embraced Sarah, seen her green eyes, flickering beneath the bundle of blankets, they had fallen in love with her.

Now they never left the house when it snowed, never let the door creep open for longer than a second, while Mr Shears snatched up the paper and quickly swung the door closed.

It had been the snow that killed her. The snow Mrs Shears couldn't wipe from her windscreen. She still remembered it finally flying off as they hit the truck and swung wildly into the stream of cars behind them.

As Mrs Shears replayed her most terrifying thoughts, a small knock pressed through the silence.

"Come in!" Mr Shears said, his voice sounding tired.

Again another knock. Mrs Shears stood up and walked slowly to the door, turning the knob in her thin, white fingers. She sighed, as the door opened

and gasped, placing a hand to her mouth and crying silently.

There before her stood a girl of about fifteen, her two plaits tucked beneath a green hood the same colour as her eyes.

“Oh my goodness! Will!” she called, sinking to her knees as her husband came to the door.

He too, slapped a hand to his mouth, seeing the familiar face before him. He then pulled the girl into his arms and squeezed her shoulders, structured just as he remembered them, only taller.

“You’re alive! We thought you were...”

“Were what?”

“Dead,” Mr Shears whispered.

“Why would I be dead?” the girl answered, cocking her head. “I’m sorry but I really should go, I’ve been looking all day and I’m tired.”

“Looking for who honey?” Mr Shears asked

“My sister Sarah.”

“Sarah...? You were Sarah’s sister?”

“Twin sister actually. Do you know her?”

“She passed away. I thought you were her.”

Mr Shears realised how stupid this sounded as he said it. They were both so hopelessly longing for their daughter to return, that they had been filled with a fantasy that this girl may be her.

“I’m Lucy and I’m curious to know what Sarah was like.” She seemed sad her sister had died.

But at that moment Mr and Mrs Shears felt, for the first time in years, happy to recount the stories of Sarah’s life, before her untimely death.

Lucy had given them a new hope.

### **Judge’s Comments**

*Although Lily has chosen a very deep topic for her storyline, she has written exceptionally well about the grief and sadness of people who are much older than herself—which makes me wonder if her entry is based on fact. If not, she has used her imagination skilfully but, when writing outside your experience, I do encourage you to first research the topic carefully in order to tell the story in a credible manner.*

*Lily’s short opening line is excellent as it immediately captures the attention. She has been careful to provide key information little by little. Not giving too much detail all at once is vital if you are to hold the reader’s interest. This is especially true of a mystery story, where you want to keep your reader guessing until you’re ready to give the punch line.*

*Lily’s use of the titles Mr and Mrs also adds a youthful aspect that makes this story suitable for teenage girls in particular.*

*Flow, grammar and punctuation are good, although a bit more detail on Sarah having been adopted would be helpful, as I became so engrossed in the story that I’d forgotten that detail when Lucy came on the scene. Other recommendations / corrections are:*

- *Para 2—1st sentence: Rather use 'bright' instead of 'enlightened'. Also delete 'which looked as though the sun had set...' as '... large shadows*

*beneath their sad blue eyes' already infers dullness.*

- *Para 4—Delete the comma after 'green eyes'. Also, the last phrase doesn't follow on well. I suggest putting a full stop after 'second.' Then delete the word 'while' and rewrite the final phrase as a new sentence: 'Mr Shears always snatched up the paper and swung it closed.'*
- *Para 9—should read 'with her thin, white fingers' and 'then gasped, putting a hand...'*
- *Para 12—This sentence is clumsy. To correct it, put a full stop after '...shoulders.' Then rewrite the next sentence as, 'She was just as he remembered her, only taller.'*

*This is otherwise a highly commendable story. Well done, Lily. Do keep writing.*

## Second Place



**Ruth  
Jamieson**  
of Whakatane

### The Mysterious Stranger

“Same as usual?” Ryan asked his friend, Jayden, as they entered the ice cream parlour.

The teenage boys sat enjoying their treat.

“Did you hear that? That guy’s asking about my neighbours, the Millers.” Jayden was all ears.

“He does look a seedy character with that graphic black shirt and scruffy beard.”

Jayden drew a mental picture, trying not to look overly interested, then ‘Seedy’ was gone.

“I think we’d best keep a watch on the Millers,” Jayden said.

Back home the boys set up vigil in Jayden’s upstairs room. “Hey, Jayden. Seedy just pulled up... seems to be just sitting there... look, Mr. Miller ‘s coming out... he’s going out on the deck.”

“He told me he sits there everyday and prays for his son, Steven who left home years ago. I do hope he’s safe there today.”

“Hey, Seedy’s getting out.”

“I think we need to make a move,” Jayden tried to sound confident.

“Any bright ideas?”

“I’ll grab the baseball bat, you get the ball and glove... and grab a pen.

“Right behind you Jayden,” Ryan said as they left the house.

“Are you looking for someone, Sir?” Jayden asked, the bat slug over his shoulder.

“Ah...no...none of your business.”

“Are you here to cause trouble?” Ryan tossed the ball into his glove.

“No...now go play your game.” Seedy got into his car and drove away while Jayden quickly wrote down the car plate number on his hand.

“I don’t like him.” Ryan let out a long breath.

“We need to tell the Millers to be careful and not open their door to strangers.”

Later that afternoon when Jayden's mum arrived home Jayden asked if Ryan could stay over, explaining briefly why.

"You boys be careful," She said, "You need to call the cops if you suspect anything."

"He's back... looks like he's going over to the Millers... wait, he's going back to his car... what's he up to now?" Ryan sounded nervous.

"Mum, we're going to slip out along the hedge... ring the Millers and tell them not to open their door."

Here," Jayden's mum said as she handed them her cell phone, "give me a ring if I should call the police."

Jayden picked up the bat. The cool autumn air sent a shiver down his spine.

"He's heading for the front door. You stay here. If I shift the bat to my left shoulder, ring Mum." Jayden inhaled deeply while walking toward 'Seedy.'

"Back here again?" Jayden's loud voice helped cover his nerves.

Seedy spun around, surprised.

"So... you're playing detective now with that bat."

"The Millers are good people and don't need to be bothered by the likes of you."

Seedy put his hand in his pocket causing Jayden to consider shifting the bat.

"Look, kid," Seedy held out a tattered photo, his voice quieter as he continued, "that's my parents thirty years ago when I left home."

"What's your name?" Jayden was still suspicious.

"Steven."

"They've been expecting you." Jayden continued, "I'll tell them its okay to open the door."

### **Judge's Comments**

*Unlike Susan and Lily who have written primarily for young girls, Ruth's entry is an exciting story that most boys would enjoy. Her use of modern dialogue throughout the piece is also effective, as it keeps the story fast moving and in the present moment, as well as engaging and holding the attention and imagination of the younger reader. The Christian perspective is also well presented and not overbearing.*

*Grammar and punctuation are good overall. However, the overuse of ellipsis points has interrupted the story's flow slightly—simply because too many triple dots can make text difficult to read. Short snappy sentences would be better in most instances. e.g. The first paragraph in section two could be rewritten as: "Hey, Jayden. Seedy just pulled up. He's just sitting there. Look! Mr. Miller's coming out. He's going out on the deck."*

*There is also a problem with flow at the beginning of the story. Launching into "Did you hear that?" without giving the reader any prior explanation is too sudden a transition from the low-key introduction to the beginning of the story's mysterious / thrilling aspect. The second paragraph could easily be extended to include Ryan's observation of the seedy character by rewriting it as:*

*'The teenage boys were enjoying their treat when Ryan noticed a seedy-looking character asking the guy at the counter a question about the Millers.'*

To avoid repetition, 'the Millers' can then be deleted from the next sentence, which would simply end with "... my neighbours".

I especially enjoyed the story's conclusion, (which was unexpected even though it is hinted at in paragraph 8), but it is a bit too abrupt. A show of relief or embarrassment on the part of the boys and a response from Mr Miller when he realises what the fuss is about would have rounded it off nicely.

Apart from the above and one spelling mistake, which I think is a typo, this is a well-written story with only a couple of small areas needing correction, as follows:

- Para 8—It is unclear who's speaking here. Rewrite the beginning of the sentence as, "I know. He told me...." Also put a comma after "...Steven, who left home..."
- Para 21—"...careful," she said. Put 'she' in lower case.
- Para 24—"...if you want me to call the police" would read better.

Well done Ruth. I look forward to getting further entries from you.

## Third Place



**Eion  
Field**  
of Hamilton

## Doctor Who?

Darryn stood outside the gym, waiting for his dad to pick him up. "I hope he's not late again," Darryn was thinking. "It'll be dark soon."

His father wasn't late, but soon after getting into the car, Darryn knew something was wrong. Dad's demeanour and the smell of beer indicated he'd been drinking.

"You shouldn't be driving, Dad." The boy had learned to speak frankly, even though only 13.

"I can tell you've had one too many." Darryn was not afraid to be direct, in spite of the risk his father would become angry. But tonight he just grunted and accelerated away, a little too fast maybe.

Darryn checked his seatbelt as Dad nudged the gas pedal. "Why can't he be responsible like Mum?" he thought to himself. It was getting dark as they turned off the main road, tyres squealing.

"Three more intersections and we're home." Darryn silently hung on and sat scared stiff. His dad slewed into the next corner, but this time he misjudged. The car mounted the kerb then went sideways over a bank and crashed down into a small creek. As it came to rest on its left side, Darryn's head was thrown against the pillar. He felt a heavy knock to his forehead. Blood trickled from a painful gash above his left eye. He heard his father curse. Then the boy lost consciousness.

Slowly Darryn came round. He was aware of people talking. A man was speaking urgently, a kindly voice close by assured him he'd be okay, and willing hands were lifting him through the driver's window. In the darkness, blue and red flashes meant the police had arrived. Faintly, the boy heard the wail of an ambulance as the helpers brought him up to the street. A lady

from a house nearby provided a blanket to cover him while they waited. “The Ambo’s almost here, love”, she half whispered. “You’re going to be fine.”

Meanwhile Darryn’s father, unhurt in the crash, paced up and down. A woman constable tried to speak with him, but he wouldn’t answer questions. The other cop stepped up to warn him. Angry and upset, the drunkard aimed a punch at the policeman.

It was furthering his troubles. The cop deftly got hold of the man’s swinging arm and bent it behind his back, neutralising the attack. The woman officer immediately clamped handcuffs on the offender. When more police arrived, Darryn’s dad was driven away to the station, somewhat subdued. He’d be in the lockup for tonight and get charged tomorrow.

Darryn was being hurried to the hospital by ambulance, its red beacon flashing. The medic dressed his wound as they went. Shortly they arrived at A & E, the boy drifting in and out of consciousness. Finally he was wheeled into a room and a doctor was called. The doctor walked in and stopped cold. “That’s my son! That’s Darryn!”

Darryn opened his eyes for a second and murmured two faint words “Hi Mum.”

### **Judge’s Comments**

*Eion’s entry is excellent in that it keeps the reader wondering what’s going to happen next. His unexpected conclusion is also good because it provides the answer to the one mysterious factor in the piece.*

*What impacted me most about Eion’s story is its relevance to the drinking*

*culture in our modern society. However, although many people of all ages would be able to relate to this aspect, I did feel it might be a bit too sombre for a teen with an alcoholic parent. While many children suffer this sort of abuse, they do need to be given hope. Adding some remorse or panic on the part of Darryn’s dad, or a Christian message, would have achieved this to some extent.*

*The grammar, punctuation and flow of the piece are generally good. Changes that need to be made are as follows”*

#### Para 1

- 2nd sentence—Change ‘Darryn was thinking’ to ‘Darryn thought’. The thought should also be put either in single quote marks or only italics, the latter being the modern preference.
- ‘Demeanour’ is a word now seldom used so probably wouldn’t be understood by a teen. A phrase like ‘The look on Dad’s face...’ would be better.
- When Darryn speaks to his dad in this para, it would be better if the dialogue wasn’t interrupted by ‘The boy had learned to speak frankly...’. This paragraph could then be ended with, ‘Although only 13, Darryn was not afraid to speak the truth, in spite of...’ NB: Changing ‘frankly’ to ‘the truth’ would be better understood by a teen.

#### Para 3

- 2nd last sentence—‘ambo’ should be in lower case. Delete the word ‘half’ from she half whispered. It isn’t necessary. You either whisper or you don’t.

### Paras 4 & 5

- In para 4, 'neutralising the attack' is too complicated. Rather rewrite it as 'to stop him lashing out again'.
- In paras 4 & 5, change 'woman constable' and 'woman officer' to 'female constable', and 'female officer'. 'Female' is the commonly used term.
- In para 5, delete the word 'being' from Darryn was being hurried...

Well done, Eion, for submitting such a thoughtfully written entry. You clearly have the ability to analyse human nature very well and I believe you can further develop this piece by writing a sequel to it—and maybe even several.

## Level Two

**Judge:**  
**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.

### General Comments

*It is great to see new entries coming in for 2014!*

*Both Prue and Dianne showed the excitement I had been looking for in this assignment, in their very readable newsy articles.*

*Newspaper articles are a distinct genre. Notably, they need to be written in unambiguous, succinct language. The vital information should be near the beginning because editors, if they want to shorten a writer's entry, tend to cut the end off rather than edit the article.*

*Readers also tend to scan the first paragraphs of an article to see if it will interest them enough to read the remainder.*

*They need a title that gives a good indication of the article's content, together with a strong introductory paragraph that summarises the major points of the article without packing too much in. Dianne's introduction was very good in both respects.*

*Dialogue is useful in articles as it helps to make the article more lively and personal. It needs to be properly punctuated, with care taken to ensure the reader always knows who is talking.*

## First Place



**Dianne  
Ross**  
of Nelson

### Miracle saves children from slavery

A widow's two sons were miraculously saved from slavery last week when a bottle of oil provided the answer to their desperate situation.

After Pheobe Joash's husband, a member of the local Prophets' Fellowship, died recently, she was left in serious debt. Then, to make the situation worse, the debt collectors demanded she pay up or they would take her two sons as slaves.

Phoebe says she was desperate and the only one she could turn to was Elisha,

the leader of the Prophet Fellowship.

“I went to him, begging him in tears, for help,” she says.

The prophet asked her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what have you got in your house?”

She says she had nothing in her house at the time, except for a little oil.

“Elisha told me to go and collect oil bottles from all of my neighbours. I was to collect lots of them. After that, I was to take my two sons, go into my house and shut the door. We were to fill all the oil bottles with my little bit of oil.”

“Well, I was pretty sceptical. However, we went around all our neighbours and collected as many empty oil bottles as we could. We took them home and started work, filling every one of them from our one bottle. The oil just kept on running. We were so excited. We couldn’t believe our eyes.”

She says that when she told her son to bring another bottle, he told her they were all full. At that moment the oil stopped running.

“I ran back to Elisha to tell him what had happened. He calmly told me, “Sell the oil and pay your debt. You can use the rest to live on.”

Phoebe says she never expected a miracle like this to happen. If it weren’t for God’s mercy, the family would never have been able to repay the debt. Then, from the sale of the remaining oil, she says she had enough to live on.

“I was overwhelmed with thanks to God for his great kindness to our family.”

## Judge’s Comments

*Hi Dianne. I have awarded you first place. Well done.*

*From start to finish, your article was informative and interesting. The title is clear, and the introduction and conclusion are excellent.*

*In the 2nd paragraph, I suggest you shift the ‘Then’ to a later part of the sentence, such as ... ‘the debt collectors then demanded...’ The word ‘then’ isn’t very good to start a sentence with.*

*‘Well’ is also not a good word to start a sentence with, but as you have used it in dialogue – and people do speak like that – it is more acceptable.*

*Although you’ve used dialogue well, I think it could be improved by reducing the pattern of alternating direct with indirect speech, which becomes noticeable from about half way. For example, you could combine a few of the short paragraphs towards the end: ‘She says that... to live on’.*

*In the paragraph where Elisha tells Phoebe to collect bottles, your use of the direction ‘I was to’ or ‘we were to’ could be made more direct by saying: ‘Elisha told me to collect lots of bottles... take my two sons...’*

*In most writing, it is satisfactory to skip attributions (‘she said’) once the characters have been introduced, but I think with newspaper articles – which are considered factual of course – it is better to err on the side of caution, and make sure readers always know who is talking. The long paragraph ‘Well, I was pretty sceptical...’ could either have a ‘she said’ at the end or in the middle somewhere; or you could omit*

*the speech mark at the beginning of the paragraph, which would infer that you are continuing the speech from the paragraph before it.*

## Second Place



**Prue Francis**  
of New Plymouth

### Big Goliath Dead

Bethlehem – The Philistine giant, Goliath, died yesterday at the hands of a little known shepherd boy, David, son of Jesse, from Bethlehem.

The two armies had drawn their battle lines on either side of the Elah Valley in Judah, the Israelites cowed into submission by the superior strength of the Philistine champion. His bullying tactics struck terror into the opposing army. Abner, commander of the Israelite army, said his defeat caused a flood of euphoria rarely seen in modern armies.

“I was standing close to the front line,” said an Israelite soldier, “so I saw everything. It was unbelievable! A miracle, really.”

King Saul’s armour bearer said that David was untrained in warfare but had rejected the king’s offer of armour. He had used his sling with ordinary river stones as ammunition.

“He aimed straight at Goliath’s head,” said a Philistine survivor. “Our giant dropped with a mighty thud. David

wasted no time in finishing him off. I saw a spurt of blood and guessed that David took Goliath’s sword. There was pandemonium as our soldiers panicked and fled.”

One of King Saul’s aides confirmed that David had visited his brothers at the battle front. He talked to several soldiers about the need to confront Goliath’s disrespect for Judah’s God.

“David was horrified that an ungodly Philistine could be so brazen in denouncing our God,” said Shammah, David’s brother. ‘His mockery and defiance were too much for David to tolerate.”

King Saul promised a substantial reward for the man who killed Goliath. David will receive money, land and livestock. Saul’s daughter, Michal, will be offered in marriage to the hero. His family will also be exempt from all taxes.

While the Philistines are burying their dead, all Israel’s families are preparing celebration meals. The story of yesterday’s battle will be talked about repeatedly so that future generations will never forget.

### Judge’s Comments

*Hi Prue. I loved the way you captured the excitement of this event, and have awarded you 2nd place. Well done. Your title and introduction both start the article off very well. You have used plenty of dialogue, which I think is largely why your article has such a sense of excitement about it. However, for only 350 words, I think six different people’s input is probably too many.*

*The story’s flow is not quite logical. For example, the paragraphs about David*

*going to the battle front belong before the account of him overcoming Goliath; while the sentences by Abner and the Israelite soldier would be better after the miracle has been described.*

*After the word 'Judah' in the 2nd paragraph, a semi-colon would be better than the comma, as the second part of the sentence is an independent clause. Alternatively, the following phrase could start by '...and the Israelites were...'*

*Finally, inserting 'had' into 'King Saul [had] promised...' , which slightly changes the tense, (to past perfect) means that readers won't think the promise was made after the miracle.*

*Please note the format requirements written on the back cover of the CW. It isn't necessary to spread out your lines as much as you did.*

*Well done. A great story. God Bless. Janice.*

## **Level Three**

**Judge:**

**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.

### **General Comments**

*Thank you to all who entered. It was wonderful to receive so many great stories, all well written by people who clearly have a merry heart. The final placings given were not based on*

*how well the entries made the judge laugh (which they all did) but on how well they showed the good that comes from having a merry heart.*

*As would be expected at Level Three, the quality of writing was generally very good. I would, however, encourage entrants to check their choice of words; some word meanings did not quite fit the context in which they were used.*

*As well as those newly promoted to Level Three it was great to receive entries from long-time members. It certainly enriched the competition. Thank you everyone.*

## **First Place**



**Lois Farrow**  
of Christchurch

## **Turn Around**

"Hi there," my cousin Jenny's cheerful voice called out as she dropped by for coffee.

"Hey, Jenny," I said as we settled. "Your gloom and doom has gone, what's happened?"

She laughed.

"Noticeable, eh! You're right. I was grumpy all the time and really struggling, complaining and constantly criticising. It had become a habit and I couldn't break it." She paused as she thought back.

"So I made it a matter of prayer. I asked God to help me overcome my spirit of

complaining. It took time, but you know what He sent me?"

"No, I would never guess; tell me."

"Psalm 16," she said. "I heard it on Radio Rhema and it really struck me. I looked it up and I've been living in it ever since."

"Living in a Psalm," I said. "That sounds funny."

"Here, I'll read part of it.

'Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made me secure.'

"I was grumbling about everything but God showed me that He assigned me my place, and that it was good. I was so blessed, and I couldn't even see it. Look at this:

'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.'

"My life is good; what did I really have to complain about? And then this:

'Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure.'

"I was reminded of a book I read years ago called *The Power of Praise* so I started to praise God. Whenever negative thoughts came to mind I replaced them with praises. And you know the next funny thing?"

"No, tell me."

"When I went to the doctor my blood pressure was down and he halved my medication! My change in attitude really showed. God had helped me to laugh and to relax."

I looked at Jenny's glowing face.

"That reminds me of that verse about a merry heart doing good like a medicine," I said. "Isn't God good? And isn't it fun to find these things in His word?"

Psalm 16:5-11

Proverbs 17:22

## Judge's Comments

*What a great first entry to this level, Lois. In some ways your work was like an exposition of a passage of scripture but your clever use of dialogue between two cousins flowed naturally.*

*As Julie Belding often says, it is no longer correct to capitalise pronouns for God (e.g. His word as in the last sentence). However, if you wished to call the Bible His Word then I would suggest capitalising both words as if it were a book title.*

*The comment, "Living in a Psalm. That sounds funny" provided a touch of humour. Your title was appropriate too. Best of all, the conclusion clearly demonstrated that a merry heart is excellent medicine for the body as well as the soul. Well done.*

## Second Place



**Vicki  
Nogaj**

of Welcome Bay,  
Tauranga

## Toilet Humour

My mother was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I decided the best

therapy would be attending our church's national woman's conference. She didn't agree, but she was outvoted by my step father and I.

The weekend was exactly what she needed, experiencing spiritual and emotional breakthroughs. The highlight was a hearty dose of bladder-bursting belly laughter infused with snorting, grunting and tears triggered by the following event:

I dashed into the Ladies before the morning session began as I didn't get a chance to go at the hotel. After taking care of business, I looked up at the hand basins and froze. There were several small basins positioned low, without any visible taps. Assuming they were sensor operated, I put my hands into one. Nothing. I tried them all while conducting a verbal commentary; I like to problem solve out loud. After several minutes of intense 'hands on' investigating, I gave up.

A throat clearing alerted me that someone else occupied a stall. Perhaps I could wait and see how they did it? I waited a full five minutes, which felt like an eternity with no rescue. If they were in the stall THAT long, they obviously had more pressing plumbing issues than I was currently experiencing. Or, they were taking refuge from a crazy lady who talks to herself and accosts basins. It dawned on me I was going to have to exit the room without washing my hands and with a witness.

I wrestled the door open with my elbows and saw my salvation. Six gleaming white conventional hand basins seemed to wink at me. I washed my hands, still baffled by the weird

design and wastefulness of this bathroom. I went outside and looked at the sign on the door and confirmed the cookie-cutter ladies sign was on the door. On closer inspection, it had been pasted over the original sign. The penny dropped accompanied by my jaw. Male toilets converted to female ones at a WOMEN ONLY event!

I had to give my hands an extra wash after my close encounter with a men's urinal.

### **Judge's Comments**

*This is a thoroughly enjoyable story though I suggest you visit a plumbing supplies outlet to familiarise yourself with modern toilet pans! The second paragraph brings in the healing power of humour in a clear but unobtrusive manner – quite different to Lois's approach but still very good.*

*According to the Reader's Digest Oxford dictionary the word 'stepfather' (Paragraph one) is one word. Webster's Dictionary agrees listing 'step' as a prefix.*

*There are several minor suggestions I would like to make. In paragraph two the word 'experiencing' almost appears to relate to the words 'the weekend'. Using the word 'bringing' would link the ideas correctly.*

*In the third paragraph I suggest using an em dash after the words 'verbal commentary' rather than a semicolon as the comment is an explanatory parenthesis. I would also suggest the last two sentences of the fourth paragraph would be better written thus: 'Or were they taking refuge from a crazy lady who talks to herself and*

*accosts basins? I was going to have to exit the room without washing my hands and that with a witness.'*

*Do take care that the spaces between all paragraphs are even. The space between the first two paragraphs and the last two are smaller than the rest.*

*Overall well done, Vicki.*

## Third Place



**Deborah  
McDermott**  
of Waiuku

### A Merry Heart

If there is one thing I learnt during my recent trip to Zimbabwe, it is this: 'A merry heart does good like a medicine.' I had once vowed to never return to the country of my birth. There was too much sadness to return to. Yet when my sister, Cindy, invited me back for her fiftieth birthday, I felt I had to accept. I am now so glad I did.

As the plane taxied towards the bright blue terminal at Zimbabwe's Bulawayo airport, I thought: *Wow! They've brought it up to international standards at last;* but I was wrong. On we went, past the new building to the dilapidated hangar from which I'd left the country seven years ago. I should have known! My sister had forgotten to tell me the new terminal had been built wrong and was unusable.

Amazingly, getting through customs took a short time, even in the old unautomated hangar.

"I must use the loo before riding in your old springless van," I said after giving Cindy a big hug and kiss.

"Go for it. I'll look after your bags."

I'm not quite sure what I was expecting as I opened the door to the ladies toilet.

*I'm certain it wasn't like this when I left,* I thought, covering my mouth with my hand to stifle a giggle. Although the toilet was spotlessly clean, it was devoid of a seat, a flushing handle and a cover for the cistern. As for the window—well I guess it must have been an afterthought. It appeared someone, who was clearly not a builder, had used a sledgehammer to make a hole in the wall, and then jammed an air vent cover into it! I wondered if it kept out the rain. However, it was when I stuck my hand in the cistern to flush the loo that I broke into peals of laughter. Imagine a sophisticated tourist trying to figure this one out!

Needless to say, I was merry for the rest of the day. That incident somehow set a joyful tone for the rest of my holiday.

### Judge's Comments

*This is another hilarious story. Debbie has linked the story to the theme in both the first and last paragraphs. Visiting a country that has so many bad memories*

would be difficult without a good sense of humour!

The story was well set out and a suitable picture supplied.

There are two minor suggestions I would make. In the final sentence of the first paragraph the word 'now' could be omitted.

In Paragraph two, the word 'wrong' (built wrong) is an adverb and should end with 'ly.' Change the word order to put the adverb first (wrong built) and the mistake is obvious. (A few road sign writers need to learn this too! e.g. Drive Safely instead of Drive Safe.)

Good work, Debbie.

**I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices... You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.**

—Psalm 16:8-9, 11



## Notice Board

### Landfall Essay Competition

Competition entrants are encouraged to think aloud about New Zealand culture, and to revive and sustain the tradition of vivid, contentious and creative essay writing in this country.

**Winning Prize—\$3,000**

plus a year's subscription to Landfall

**Deadline—5pm 31 July 2014**

Winning entry/ies will be published in the November 2014 issue of Landfall.



### NZ Post Book Awards

The New Zealand Post Book Awards celebrate excellence, identifying the very best books written by New Zealanders.

Books are judged in four main categories:

- Poetry
- Fiction
- Illustrated Non-fiction, and
- General Non-fiction.

One Book of the Year will be chosen from 16 finalists. Books written by first-time authors are also eligible to win the New Zealand Society of Authors Best First Book award. Books written entirely in Te Reo are eligible for the Māori Language award. The overall winning author will receive the Nielsen Booksellers' Choice award and \$2,500.

**Deadline 1 Apr 2014**

for books published between  
1 Dec 2013 – 31 May 2014

To download an entry form go to  
<http://booksellers.co.nz/awards/new-zealand-post-book-awards/submissions>

# Competitions for April 2014

## Due March 10<sup>th</sup>

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

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

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

To determine which level you're on, check the criteria on the 2014 reference sheet sent to you in December 2013 or email Jan on [jan@roads-end.co.nz](mailto:jan@roads-end.co.nz)

**Remember to send a photo** of yourself in the event you are awarded a place.

### Level One—no age restrictions

**Requirement:** TESTIMONY: Write about a time in your life when you became very aware of the goodness of God. 400 words.

**Email entry to:** Debbie McDermott at [sddp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sddp@xtra.co.nz)



*Debbie  
McDermott*

### Level Two—no age restrictions

**Requirement:** POETRY: Write a poem based on the exploits of any historical figure who lived before 1900. The poem should have a clear pattern of rhythm and rhyme, plenty of humour – and appeal to children aged about six to eight. Between 30 – 40 lines.

**Email entry to:** Janet Fleming at [mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz)



*Janet  
Fleming*

### Level Three—no age restrictions

**Requirement:** RESEARCH: Names held great significance to the Jewish people. Research the name of an Old Testament character and show how the meaning of the name was significant (or perhaps not significant) in the person's life. Maximum word count: 300 words.

**Email entry to:** Ruth Linton at [noru@woosh.co.nz](mailto:noru@woosh.co.nz)



*Ruth  
Linton*

### Under 30s—11-30 year age group

**Requirement:** What's the worst meal you've ever had? Write about it as if the event is taking place right now. 350 words.

**Email entry to:** Vicki Nogaj at [nogaj@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:nogaj@vodafone.co.nz)



*Vicki  
Nogaj*