



# River Yarns Writing Competition Winners

Fiction or non fiction short stories and poems  
with the theme 'River Reflections'.

Open, Secondary & Primary Categories

**Lower Primary School Poetry Category**

**Runner Up** - Madison Richards (St Mary's School in Alexandra)

**Winner** - Phoebe Sheehan (St Mary's School in Alexandra)

**Upper Primary School Poetry Category**

**Runner Up** - Chloe Falla (Middle Kinglake Primary School)

**Winner** - Nick Szetey (Middle Kinglake Primary School)

**Primary School Short Story Category**

**Runner Up** - Jirri Prothero (St Mary's School Alexandra)

**Winner** - Jess Donaldson (Harston Primary School)

**Secondary School Poetry Category**

**Winner** - Emily Piscioneri (FCJ College in Benalla)

**Secondary School Short Story Category**

**Winner** - Julie Dickson (St Mary's of the Angels in Nathalia)

**Open Poetry Category**

**Highly Commended** - Tricia Veale (Benalla)

**Highly Commended** - Cathy Pianta (Goorambat)

**Runner Up** – Dianne Goschnick (Alexandra)

**Winner** - Paul Bownas (Cobram)

**Open Short Story Category**

**Runner Up** - Bev Morton (Goorambat )

**Winner** – Paula Irvine (Kialla Lakes)



# River Yarns Writing Competition

*WINNER – Short Story Open Category*

## “A Snake’s Tale” by Paula Irvine - Kialla Lakes

Dad ordered us into the back of the Ute. Our laughter and excitement causing us to be silly, we could hardly hear him yelling at us to hurry and load up.

Our lilos flew about the back of the Ute as we sped along the river road, taking us to our destination, our anticipation building. The road was bumpy, riddled with pot holes and we bounced about, squealing and desperately clinging onto our lilos, towels and each other.

Someone yelled above the rushing wind “we’re here”, and I felt the excitement in the pit of my stomach, heavy like a rock – but it was not a bad feeling.

We fell out of the Ute, my sister and our friends. Dad lectured us on what we could and couldn’t do and where he would pick us up. We didn’t hear a word he said, our eyes were glued to the river.

The sun had burned the sandbar, it was hot and dry, so we sprinted into the water, hopping and jumping to cool off our blistering feet. We threw our lilos into the water and watched as the current picked them up and started dragging them away from us.

As I floated along, burning in the hot sun, letting the water lap over me, I dreamed lazily that I could see the carp dredging the bottom of the river, searching out food. The water was almost blue and very clear. The sun was warm, making me drowsy.

And the river flowed.

I could hear the others – they sounded far away, but only because I wasn’t really there – I was floating along a flowing and living river, that was pushing me away, bumping me along, wanting me to follow it as far as it could take me. I could feel my lilo tilting and tugging as the water pushed up under me and I smiled to myself.

The voices were getting closer, disrupting my own reverie, and I almost wanted them to all go away. But someone was yelling, a voice that sounded urgent. As I slowly opened my eyes and struggled to roll over on my water bed, the river trying to tip me off and into its depths, I looked at the others.

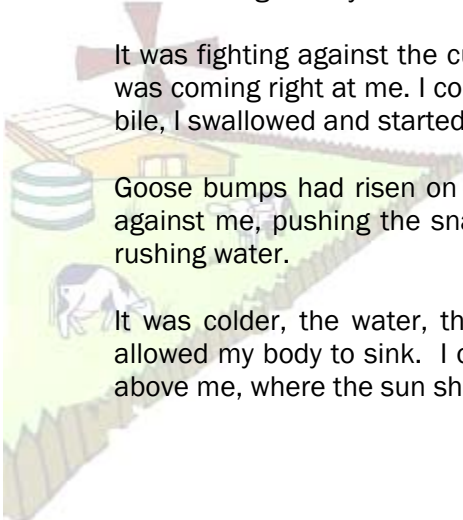
They were pointing and yelling – laughing and screaming, they seemed hysterical. They were scared, but trying not to act it, but their faces told me something was wrong. I followed the direction of their pointing fingers.

It was skimming along the top of the river, its body upright, its tail cutting through the ripples of the river and weaving its way toward me; a snake.

It was fighting against the current that was attempting to push it back into the centre of its flow. But it was coming right at me. I could feel its eyes, focused and hard, gazing right at me. Panic rose in me like bile, I swallowed and started to thrash at the water, paddling as hard as I could.

Goose bumps had risen on my sun baked body and I felt a chill wash over me. The river was fighting against me, pushing the snake in my direction. Voices were yelling. I fell, deep down, down, into the rushing water.

It was colder, the water, the further down you went. I could feel the darkness surrounding me as I allowed my body to sink. I opened my eyes and looked up and could see the lighter colour of the river above me, where the sun shone, where it was warmer, but where the snake was.



# River Yarns Writing Competition

And the river flowed.

*'I could see those people, in my way, splashing the water and laughing. When they saw me, I could sense their fear. But I don't want to be near them, I need to get away from them – people scare me, want to kill me. The river won't let me escape. It's holding me, pushing me to one of them and all I want to do is escape, escape, escape! I move harder through the water, flicking my tail, then suddenly the one I am looking at is gone. I allow the river to push me along, and as I gain speed, the current forces me to the river bank and away from the people. I am safe.'*

I pushed back up, using my arms as leverage to take me into the warmer water, and then pushed again, hard, as I broke through the surface, forgetting briefly about the snake, the sun shining on my face and the water crashing around me. Then I remembered. I looked around, panicking and everyone started laughing, somewhat hysterically. Relief. It had gone, skimming away over the top of the water until it got to land, probably more afraid of us than us of him.

We paddled on, still taking about it, but staying closer together now. No-one would admit it, but it had frightened us and we wanted the comfort of being in a group, huddling together, splashing each other as the water kept tugging us along.

I could see dad's Ute in the distance; our destination was almost upon us. He waved us in and we slowly started to paddle toward the river bank. The high bank edges seemed jagged and rough, tree roots protruded from big old gums that were leaning precariously out over the water. It seemed they too wanted to join us on our river jaunt.

As we pushed our way against the current to reach the sand bar, I could hear a galah cackling in the distance. Then a kookaburra started to laugh. It seemed to me, it was laughing at us. We dragged our water logged lilos and bodies from the pulsating water, our noses pink from sun, and we too started to laugh. We were here, the snake was not. And Dad was here too.

Again we loaded up into the Ute, dripping wet, and starting to shiver as dad picked up speed. Air rushed around us, chilling our wet bodies. I looked at the others. Then back at the water. Another time and we would come back and do this again. Another time, it would be a different group of friends. Another time and it would be a different place, but it would be the same river. Maybe the snake would come back and maybe it would not.

I looked back at the water, in the distance now, but I could still see it shimmering through the trees as we turned off the track and onto the road that would take us home. There was a certainty in me though it would always be the same. It would always be this way. Wouldn't it?

The river would always flow.

- The End -



# River Yarns Writing Competition

## *RUNNER UP – Short Story Open Category*

### “River Reflections. By the Banks of the Broken River”

by

Beverley Morton– Goorambat

Tall river red gums grow along the banks of the Broken River. Their parched leaves droop in the heat of the summer sun. The air is still and hot, permeated by the heavy scent of eucalyptus. Gnarled tree roots exposed by erosion of the river bank plunge down amongst blocks of fallen earth.

Down below, in the bed of the almost dry river, I lie blissfully in a shallow pool of clear water, not deep enough to cover me, but enough to give some relief from the relentless heat of the sun. I watch the slow trickle of water only a few centimetres wide, cutting its way through the yellow grains of sand between the chain of shallow pools that form the Broken River in summer and have given the river its name.

It's the summer of 1965. In reverie I think of times past, of the aboriginal tribes who occupied this area; I imagine the happy chatter of children splashing in the water, as they walk along the river finding fish stranded in pools. Of the women and children, enjoying the nutty taste of fat bardi grubs they have extracted from the soil beneath the gums. Of camp fires on the sand and the smell of fish roasting on the coals.

Then came the stockmen and the cattle of the Goomalibee run. The cattle standing in the shade of the river gums in the heat of the day, tails lazily swishing at flies. Thirsty stock horses being ridden down the bank, to gulp greedily at the water. The sharp barks of cattle dogs echoing up from the river bed. With the arrival of the settlers after 1840, small homesteads replaced the former bark humpies along the river. To them a small oasis in a dry parched landscape.

Rising in the Wellington-Tolmie highlands and prone to seasonal flooding downstream, the river is being dammed to form a large artificial lake. Lake Nillahcootie will be completed in 1967. Controlled flows will reduce the frequency of seasonal flooding downstream and the river will flow freely all through the year.

New chums to the area, we have come from Gippsland to live by the river. Unaccustomed to the intense dry heat and with no air-conditioning, the river is our only salvation.

We have horses, so one of our first jobs is to enthusiastically build stables. The neighbours are amused that we are building them near the bend of the river, but don't warn us. Later reality sets in. "You know that big log near the stables?" "Yes." "Well, there's no stump nearby. It must have floated there!"

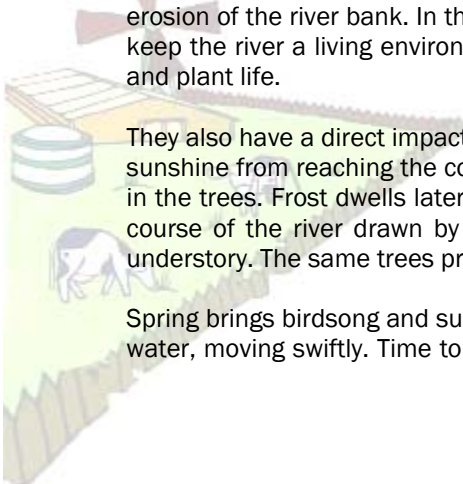
We wait for the break in the weather, for the autumn rain, for enough moisture to sow crops. It comes slowly at first, and then we listen with satisfaction to the steady drumming of the rain on the galvanized iron roof of the cottage. To the sound of our dry water tank being filled at last. The sight of the first green tinge of emerging grass lifts our spirits; we watch as the colour of the landscape changes from drab brown to refreshing green and the river flows freely once more. The leaves of the river gums no longer hang limply in the heat; they exude life.

With some coaxing the pump by the river splutters then roars into life; now we can switch from using corrosive bore water back to healthier river water for the stock and house and garden.

As the seasons progress I am drawn into life beside the river. Across the track that winds past the cottage, huge river gums grow amongst gullies formed by countless years of flooding; their strong roots bind the soil preventing erosion of the river bank. In the summer their shade reduces water temperature and light penetration, helping to keep the river a living environment. Their leaves also provide the river with organic matter and nutrients for fish and plant life.

They also have a direct impact on our environment. The low angle of the winter sun behind the tall trees prevents sunshine from reaching the cottage until midday. Shafts of sunlight penetrate the early morning mist that hangs in the trees. Frost dwells later in the shade and the house cow is not happy with my icy fingers. Rain follows the course of the river drawn by the micro climate created by the water and the trees lining the bank and their understory. The same trees provide us with precious shade in the height of the summer.

Spring brings birdsong and sunshine, and fresh new growth to the trees lining the river. The river swirls with extra water, moving swiftly. Time to try out a retired surfboard. It's impossible to paddle back up river against the fast



# River Yarns Writing Competition

flowing current. After one swift trip downstream the surfboard is returned to its home in the rafters of the shed.

The dam has been completed at Nillahcootie. No longer will shallow pools warmed by the sun, form what is left of the river. The Broken is no longer a broken river; it now flows all year round and life has changed for all those who live along its length, people, domestic stock and wild creatures alike. Platypuses live in the banks of the pump hole where the water is deepest, fish stocks have improved.

The late spring rains fall heavier in the catchment areas. The new dam wall at Nillacoote is causing concern. Will it hold? Anxiously we watch the level of the rising water. Extra provisions are brought from town as the bridge may be cut off. Firewood is cut and stacked on verandahs. There is a flood warning out for the Broken downstream of Casey's weir. Cattle and sheep are moved to higher ground. It's all hands on deck.

It is said that the Broken River when swollen is the fastest flowing river in Australia. The river fills to capacity, then breaking its banks the swirling flood water cascades into gullies and billabongs and then swiftly spreads out across the river flats which are now lower than the river; depressed by so many years of flooding. These are usually flash floods, the water flows swiftly following the lie of the land and will drain away through natural creeks and water courses.

The two houses and the sheds are high and dry. The stables are not! By the time its horse priority they are standing in water knee deep. The grey is a stock horse from the Murrumbidgee so is used to floods. He steadies the two thoroughbreds and leads them through the cut fence line to higher ground.

An eye is kept on the stock during the night as sheep and cattle have a tendency to walk back into the flood water.

When the flood recedes, then the work begins. There are flattened fences to be re erected, others cleared of debris. We wait for a shower of rain to clear the mud from the pastures.

The farmers say that the river silt from a flood is as good as a bag of superphosphate per acre and it should be good season, but the mosquitoes are as big as bombers.

The river red gums have produced fresh growth and an abundance of creamy yellow blossoms; their fresh gum tips sparkle in the sunlight. They can survive with natural rain fall but will be shorter with stunted growth. To grow tall and strong they depend on the natural rhythm of seasonal flooding to charge the subsoil with moisture. White cockatoos screech noisily in the upper branches; their stark white feathers and bright yellow crests brilliant against a cloudless blue sky as they feed on flowers and insects. Bee hives have been placed nearby and the bees are competing with the destructive cockatoos.

Man has a long established association with these trees. For thousands of years indigenous people used their bark for shelters and canoes. Early European settlers sometimes used the wood by the river for fuelling paddle steamers, its resistance to termites and its strength lent itself to construction of railroads, mine shafts and wharves.

Sounds of working machinery and revving chain saws echo up from downstream. Smoke from burning logs and flood debris drifts through the trees. Our river is being de-snagged. A team of men work alongside a bulldozer that is removing submerged logs and fallen trees whose roots have been completely eroded by floodwater. They are doing a very good job but there is the occasional cry of "Git out of it, bugger off, leave that one. We have to have something to come back to in a few years time." Inadvertently they are doing the right thing. It has since been found that a river will benefit from some snags as they are part of the natural ecosystem and aquatic habitat, as are the eroded roots of the river gums. The Murray Darling Commission has since recognized their importance.

Happy hours are spent fishing for redbfin. One day we actually catch a Murray cod. Much further upstream there is a deeper hole in the Broken in which dwells a huge Murray cod. This fish has been hooked by many but it always breaks the line. The nuns from a nearby convent go fishing there, first changing into their jeans behind a large tree. Before they fish they always pray that they will catch the cod, but God so far seems to be on the side of the fish!

Now irrigated paddocks flourish. We grow lucerne. The stud poll herefords are showing the benefit of all this good feed. There is plenty of water. In the summer we no longer search for water to paddle in; we have a deep swimming hole with a sandy beach and the shade of healthy trees. With irrigation, life has changed for all along the river once more.

White cockatoos screech along the river in the early mornings, we arise early to work before the heat of the day. Through the midday heat, the sheep camp in the shade of the gums alongside the river, their bodies tucked into

# River Yarns Writing Competition

the dust and their faces resting on the cool earth. In the hot still air there is no sound save their breathing and the crack of seedpods overhead as the heat causes ripe pods to open and shed seed. In these windless conditions large heavy upper limbs will suddenly crack and fall to the ground without warning. The sheep are aware of this and with the first sharp crack of a branch they are on their feet and running.

The time has come for us to leave our home by the banks of the Broken. We move to a 'dry camp' in a small country town nearby. The river no longer flows past the kitchen window, but we find that we are still dependant on the favours of the Broken River system as we are reliant on the Broken Creek for our town water supply. The health of this small waterway is of great importance to us and unites our small community. We have our own water board, money was raised in record time and the pipes were laid with voluntary labour. We all monitor the colour and quality of the water, the pressure, the level of water in the town tank. "Does someone need to go down to the creek to turn the pump on?" It seems we have merely swapped the river for the creek, but I still miss my solitary walks by the river. On hot summer days I sometimes stop to take a refreshing dip in our old irrigation pump hole on my way home from work.

My husband has died. . . . In sorrow I seek the solitude, peace and solace of the river. In the late afternoon sunshine when the shadows are long I sit quietly on the bank, blending with nature. Watching the reflections of the blue sky and river red gums in all their glory on the surface of the water, being occasionally disturbed by ripples caused by the jump of a fish. As the sun sets over the flood plain willy wag tails swoop low over the surface of the billabong, gnatting, catching insects. I listen to the splashes of river rats or platypus . . . . Life goes on. . . . Comforted, in the gathering dusk I leave the river; it's time for the small nocturnal creatures whose natural habitat is here to emerge from the trees in peace and besides I have no wish to step on a snake.

Years of drought have intervened. Water shortages have increased public awareness of the importance of a healthy river system and that to be healthy a water way must be ecologically sound.

With the growth of our nation, population growth and climate change, there is much angst and conflict of opinion. Our river systems need to be managed wisely and well. Conservation and bio-diversity are very important, but nor should the needs of primary producers be overlooked.

In 2004 the Goulburn Broken Regional River Health Strategy was developed to integrate all elements of river management, encompassing water quality and flow, riparian fauna and flora, wetlands, fisheries and recreation under the one document. The Victorian Government committed money to "the Improving Flow and Habitat in the Broken River" project.

The vision of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and their partners is: A healthy river system, with healthy, resilient and increasingly productive landscapes supporting vibrant communities.

This is being met by an ongoing, integrated approach and work between authorities, landowners and community groups with community education and advice on limited controlled grazing and ecological management of land bordering the rivers. Grants are made available to landowners for fencing of all river banks to prevent erosion; for the eradication of weeds and introduced species and the regeneration of trees. The importance of wildlife corridors is recognised and grants are available for land to be set aside for wildlife.

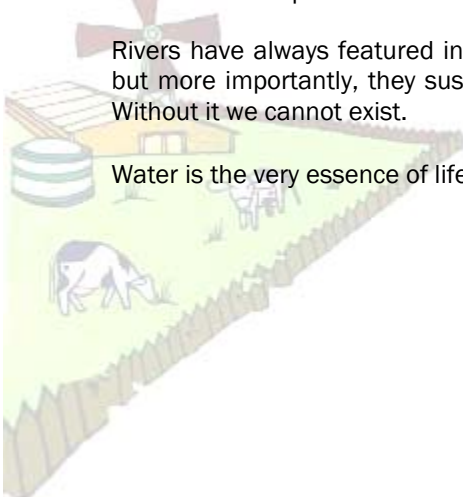
Now with the breaking of thirteen years of drought and current recommended practices being met, the Broken River is again healthy.

These days our small town's precious water supply is from a bore that is tapped into an underground river. Its water is clear but now after years of drought the water level has dropped, causing it to become concentrated and very alkaline. It corrodes our pipes and kills sensitive garden plants. We have just finished years of continual water restrictions. I hope that someday we can again draw our water from a healthy river system.

Rivers have always featured in mythology, religion and history. Great civilizations have flourished on their banks but more importantly, they sustain life. Water is a main ingredient in the web of life, of which we are all a part. Without it we cannot exist.

Water is the very essence of life. The life blood of a living planet.

- The End -



# River Yarns Writing Competition

## WINNER– Open Poetry Category

### “River Reflections”

by  
Paul Bownas - Cobram

This river, here since dreaming time  
has seen arid drought and floods sublime.  
It's seen the aborigines  
cut bark canoes from mighty trees.  
It's seen the sunshine, felt the rain:  
Seen white men come, and felt the pain  
as from its waters sweet they drew  
More than they should, as well they knew.

Here mighty river red gums grow,  
whose roots the swirling currents slow.  
While trailing plumes of smoke and steam,  
great paddle steamers cruise this stream.  
Here zealous anglers cast their rods  
all dreaming of a Murray Cod.  
Whilst on the bank, the willow trees  
wave tendrils green upon the breeze.

Here lovers come to kiss and hug,  
nomadic houseboats drift and chug,  
while laughing children splash and play  
till sunset heralds close of the day.  
The dying sun turns water red,  
soft purple clouds sail overhead,  
and, as the darkness gently falls,  
the evening Mopoke softly calls.

- The End-

## RUNNER UP – Open Poetry Category

### “My Favourite Pastime”

by  
Dianne Goschnick– Alexandra

Along the Goulburn River, and just around the bend,  
I like to sit and fish all day long, until the daylight ends.  
So calm and serene the river flows, a beautiful place to see,  
Even if no fish I catch, it's such a restful place to be.

Just sitting by the river bank, casting a line across the river  
Gives one a euphoric feeling, it can even make you quiver.  
Birds and insects can delight you, as you sit so quiet and listen  
and the dappled light across the river, makes the water glisten.

There is so much nature and beauty, along the rivers and streams,  
A place where you can sit and think, or conjure up your dreams.  
You may even see a platypus, whilst on the waters' edge it plays  
and you can bask a little in the sunshine, on one of those lazy days.

So if it is not a place you usually visit, I suggest you go and see  
You will soon appreciate its beauty, such a wondrous place to be.  
Go and take a picnic, or a fishing rod or two  
and you will thoroughly enjoy the experience, with lots of things to do.

- The End-

# River Yarns Writing Competition

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**  
**Open Poetry Category**

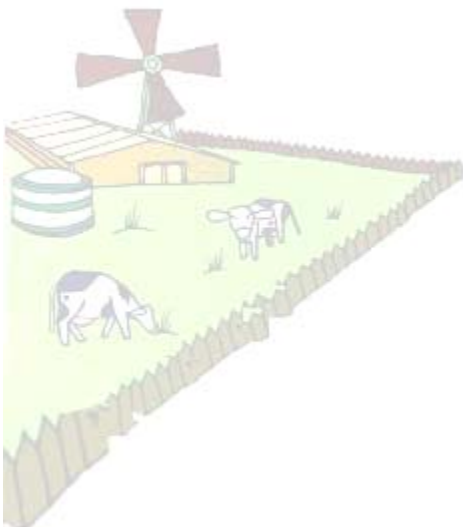
**“Reflections”**  
by  
**Tricia Veale - Benalla**

Gum trees reflect glisten in early morning lake  
I'm watching from the bank for a Platypus  
then one surfaces floating in expanding rings  
duck-bill forward eyes shining upwards  
suddenly he dives back into waterscapes  
air bubbles pop to the surface travelling  
following the underwater swim down  
then he appears again floating breathing  
long tail duck feet slowly supporting

a Willy Wagtail chitters flies in pirouettes  
balancing fluttering on a floating branch  
suddenly a large fish flops upwards splash  
large rippling rings and Moorhens jump run  
Ducks Coots jerkily swim away downstream  
lovely Purple Swamp Hen paces the river bank  
then a Spoonbill flies past... twig in beak  
landing in the canopy of a spotted gum  
building a nest so precariously balanced

many people walk this track and see  
the wonders of nature that surround  
encompass this garden of natural woodland  
hear the bird calls cackling Kookaburras  
the shimmering reflections on beautiful lake  
flow on swiftly moving to the un-Broken River.

- The End-



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**  
**Open Poetry Category**

**“Racing to the Sandbank - 1969”**  
by  
**Cathy Pianta - Goorambat**

*Last one down the bank's a rotten egg!*

and so we raced, with dusty-thonged feet and old towels flying.  
Four hundred and eighty-nine steps from the verandah to the  
sandbank.

As we left the climbing yellow roses hugging with green leaves the  
scorching concrete columns.  
in the mid-January afternoon we raced.

Down through the orchard, sixty-five, over, under or through the fence,  
depending upon your age,  
Past the big willow with its panting green leaves of shady hanging  
mystery, one hundred and ten.

Straight toward the river-bank, sharp twigs and gumnuts pricking and  
stabbing our ill-protected feet, one hundred and sixty-four.

All eyes and dry scratched legs now turned to follow the dusty track,  
a two-wheeled, rutted snake weaving its uneven way past Archers'  
Camp and the limestone inlet we loved  
(where, mud-covered, lay many ours of forbidden adventure), two  
hundred and fifty-three.

With clouds of dust enveloping us, and drowning out a mother's  
anxious

“Slow down! Watch for snakes!”

and with no care for crooked branches in the bush along the track  
which may or may not uncoil and test the wind with the approaching  
thunder of our racing feet,  
three hundred and twenty-three.

We cared for nothing but to be first in. We barely saw the wattle-tree,  
nor smelt its sickly yellow. We choked not on the sun-dried dust  
enveloping our mother, nor thought to help to push the pram which  
carried a chubby, blonde brother.

*He'd not be first in.* Four hundred and thirty-five.

What mattered most was the first, clean dive, the breaking of that  
mirror

reflecting giant redgums on the banks of *our river*.

What mattered most was to be the one to first disappear

And dive

And dive

And open your eyes and see only the murky, muddy splendour of our  
Murray.

Four hundred and eighty-nine.

- The End-

# River Yarns Writing Competition

## WINNER – Secondary Short Story Category

### “River Dreams”

by

Julie Dickson – St Mary’s of the Angels, Nathalia

My best friend Mika and I stared in awe at the place where we would be having our school camp. The sight of the magnificent River Red Gums and the wide expanse of the Murray River was breathtaking.

After setting up camp, my team, Stream, gathered shivering in our bathers down by the river. Yay, Mika was in my group. So was my crush, William, and his best friend, Rodney. Boy, did William’s six-pack look cute. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Mika checking out Rodney’s tight abs. Unfortunately, Angela and her best friend, Rosa, were also on our team. Angela was the most popular girl in school and expected everyone to do everything for her.

We were on dinner duty that night, so I was wondering what we were doing here. Mr Oliver handed out sharp pointy sticks, which confused me even more.

“Your task is to throw your spear into the water and kill the fish,” explained Mr Oliver, who then proceeded to demonstrate. “Once you’ve caught enough fish for the whole camp, we’ll cook them on an open fire.”

“Yeah, man,” said William.

“Sweet, man,” said Rodney.

“You’re joking,” I said, “there’s no way I’m killing a fish.”

“Poor fish,” agreed Mika.

“I’m a vegetarian,” said Rosa.

“And I don’t make my own dinner,” said Angela.

“Alright then, you girls can scrounge up a meal in the supply tent,” said Mr Oliver.

So us girls headed over to the supply tent.

“There’s soup and bread,” I suggested.

“That’ll do. It’s easy to make,” said Mika.

“How about I get the fire going?” I asked.

Mr Oliver and the boys came back from the river with a bucketful of fish each. Soon dinner was ready. The fish were fried and the soup was hot. The only thing Angela had done to help was watch.

While we sat around the fire eating our dinner, Mr Oliver said, “I’m going to tell you a story about the sea monster that lived in this very river.” The story he told made me jump in fright and spill my soup! He made the sea monster sound so scary that I never wanted to go in the river again. But the sea monster just ended up being a 3-metre cod some fisherman caught a long time ago!

After dinner we went for a walk along the river’s edge. I could feel the cold water on the rocks through my shoes. It sent a shiver up my spine. Even though the sea monster was only a legend, I couldn’t help but think it was real. I stepped onto the rock in front of me and slipped. I fell into the water with a loud splash.

Mika was about to save me but stopped because she saw William reach out to me first. She winked at me as William helped me up onto the rocks.

“Are you alright?” he asked.

“Yes, thanks, William. I’m just really cold now.”

William wrapped his jacket around me. “Here you go.”

I smiled. “Thanks.”

“I think William likes you,” Mika whispered to me later.

I couldn’t get to sleep that night, thinking about William. Did he really like me? It felt like I’d only just fallen asleep when it was time to get up again!

After breakfast, we headed down to the river to try our hand at rafting. Team Stream was split into two groups. Rodney, Mika, and Rosa were in one group. I was with William (Yay!) and Angela (Ughh!). Naturally, William and I did all the rowing, while Angela just took in the view.

After lunch Angela and Rosa sat on the rocks showing off their beautiful bodies. Not that the boys noticed anyway. They were too busy playing poison ball in the river. Mika and I were on the bank watching the boys.

Then William threw a stray ball which hit Mika on the head! It knocked her off the bank and into the river. Rodney rushed over, dragged her out of the water, and started giving her mouth to mouth. Mika sat up suddenly and spat out some water. When she saw Rodney in front of her, she nearly fainted again.

“So, uh, Mika, do you want to go out with me sometime?” asked Rodney.

“I’d love to,” Mika swooned.

That afternoon we went canoeing. I was in a canoe with Angela up the front and William behind me. Angela just sat there with her oar on her lap.

“We’re not going to win the canoe challenge if Angela doesn’t paddle,” William whispered to me.

“Well, since we’re not going to win anyway ...” I stood up.

# River Yarns Writing Competition

The canoe tipped over and we all went overboard! Angela screamed, but William and I just laughed. Angela glared at us. Her expensive clothes were drenched, her hair was straggly, and her make-up was streaked. She stormed off and left William and I on our own. Suddenly, William scooped me up into his arms and kissed me. "Do you want to go out with me sometime?" he asked.

"I'd love to," I replied.

The next day was the last day of camp. Everyone was pumped for the team challenge, which incorporated all the skills we had learned.

"Ready, set, go!" called out Mr Oliver.

First we had to spear a fish. Angela made such a ruckus, she scared all the fish away. Then we rafted across the river, with no help from Angela. On the other side of the river, we climbed into our canoe and raced back. We paddled as fast as we could, since we were way behind! Suddenly, the canoe tipped over - again.

"Arrgghh!" screamed Angela, "not again!"

Well, we didn't win. Neither did Rodney, Mika and Rosa. Never mind. It was still the BEST school camp ever. Mika and I both got our dream boyfriends, Angela got her come-uppance, and we all learnt some cool new skills along the banks of the beautiful Murray River.

- The End -

---

## WINNER – Secondary Poetry Category

### “River Reflections” by Emily Piscioneri - FCJ College, Benalla

The sounds surround, soothing and clear,  
A gentle harmony composed for one's ear.  
The touch of one's finger leaves an infinite trace,  
An imprint that ripples along the mere.

How relaxing it is for one to touch,  
A substance so pure that can offer so much.  
The continual flow that streams through the earth,  
Is one on which all things need to clutch.

Thoughts dance effortlessly, around in one's head,  
As softly as the butterfly goes by with wings spread.  
The river glides smoothly, along the flat rocks,  
Small slippery fish surface, as swift as they fled.

For one to taste water is for one to revive,  
A private song of praise, thankful to be alive.  
We are lucky to have received such a wonderful gift,  
To gain the benefits of water without having to strive.

The breeze gently circles, it captures one's dreams,  
Journeying up towards the light's glowing beams.  
Thoughts that creep silently like the roots of the gum,  
Binding water and earth in uneven seams.

The wonders of nature, that one can perceive,  
Are such a wonderful mystery that's hard to believe.  
All living things, have water as base,  
Joining the world as one, united, we breathe.

- The End -

