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MEDIA RELEASE

CHRISTCHURCH STUDENTS TAKE TOP POETRY AWARDS

Christchurch secondary school students have scooped the two top prizes at the 2009 New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards, which were held at a ceremony in Wellington on Friday, 28 August.

Charlotte Trevella, of Rangi Ruru Girls' School was awarded Best Poem for her entry, 'To a Sister', while Samantha (Sammy) Hickson, of Middleton Grange School, won Best Lyric Poem for 'You Just Can't See It'.

As Best Poem winner, Charlotte received a cash prize of \$500 and a weekend for two at New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week, part of the New Zealand International Arts Festival in Wellington in March 2010. Sammy also received a \$500 cash prize and her poem has been adapted and recorded into a song by singer/songwriter Jason Kerrison of New Zealand Music Award winning band Opshop. Mr Kerrison performed the song exclusively at the awards ceremony and Loop will distribute the song as a single and music video to radio and TV stations nationwide. The song will also be available as a free download from www.loop.co.nz.

The winners were selected from a shortlist of six finalists in each category, which were announced on 22 July. Winners and shortlisted students also receive a package of literary prizes from the New Zealand Book Council, Booksellers New Zealand, the New Zealand Society of Authors, and the magazines *Sport* and *Landfall*.

Former Poet Laureate Jenny Bornholdt, who judged the Best Poem category, said of Charlotte's poem, "This is an extraordinarily good poem. Its poise and assured use of language is quite astonishing – it's a sophisticated and very accomplished poem that doesn't put a foot wrong."

Charlotte has already produced her first book of poems to be published in September.

Mr Kerrison, who judged the Best Lyric Poem entries, said he was looking for a poem that wouldn't have to be altered considerably, and would more or less feel like it was being sung as one simply read it.

"'You Just Can't See It' instantly appealed to the heart and ear," said Mr Kerrison. "The composition had a clear sense of prosody (meter / rhythm) such that everything within the poem seemed to be in relationship with everything else. Certainly one felt a sense of wholeness in the work."

This is the third year New Zealand Post has supported the National Schools Poetry Awards, which are run by Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters. It is the first year the Awards have been extended to Year 11 students.

The Awards are also supported by *Tearaway* magazine, and the bNet.

Friday's National Schools Poetry Awards ceremony will be followed during the weekend by the New Zealand Post National Schools Writing Festival, also run by Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters. The Festival includes workshops and seminars with top New Zealand writers, and will be attended by 163 Year 12 and 13 students from throughout the country.

ENDS

Best Poem

To a Sister by Charlotte Trevella, Rangi Ruru Girls' School

Our cat caught
an owl and brought
it to our doorstep: a
contorted parcel
of tendon and flight,

what a gift
it was, the hollow
scaffolding of wings
and the blood;
urgent viscous red.

*

There are reminders:
the tessellation of our
hands, bees
stealing sweetness
from clover to feed their
pale, squirming larvae,
the dresses
hanging in our wardrobes:

hand wash dry in shade
bright colours may fade over time.

*

You are thirteen years
old and
the light shines
through you, a
stained glass window
of clavicle and
brightness as you place

a bird
in the waiting
earth, above you,
the macrocarpas
swallowing the
syrupy evening of
a hot and
helpless day.

Best Lyric Poem

You Just Can't See It by Sammy Hickson, Middleton Grange School

1.
You think you're standing on your head
Because everything is upside-down
Lights are flashing, always red
Can't lift your ugly frown

Chorus
You're trying to set a bar you can't limbo
Hurdles that you can't jump
Run a race you can't finish
You've been worn down like a rock by the tide

2.
You're walking in the circle of confusion
Every step is one closer to where you started
You take a step away and it follows you
Its voice echoes in your steps

Chorus
There's no use being on the beach at sundown
If you can't see the sunset
There's no use being under water
If you're drowning

3.
You're trapped by a box
You think you can't escape
But the secret is the door's wide open
You just can't see it

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