

MEDIA RELEASE

New Zealand Post 

www.nzpost.com



For immediate release

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM AND MRS POTTS WIN SCHOOL POETRY AWARDS

Secondary students from Auckland and Hastings have scooped the two top prizes in the 2008 New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards, which were held at a ceremony in Wellington on Friday, 22 August.

Manon Revuelta (17), of Epsom Girls Grammar School, was awarded Best Poem for her entry, 'Flotsam and Jetsam', while Sonya Clark (16), of Karamu High School, Hastings, won Best Lyric Poem for 'Mrs Potts'.

As Best Poem winner, Manon received a state-of-the-art notebook and a cash prize of \$500. Sonya also received a \$500 cash prize and her poem, 'Mrs Potts' has been adapted and recorded into a song by acclaimed musician Samuel Flynn Scott, of The Phoenix Foundation. It has also been produced as a music video and is available on iTunes.

The winners were selected from a shortlist of six finalists in each category which were announced on 22 July.

Also recognised at Friday's ceremony was Kerrin Davidson from St Andrews College, Christchurch, who was recognised for her teaching of Creative Writing.

Celebrated poet Paula Green, who judged the Best Poem award, said Manon's 'Flotsam and Jetsam'; representing a portrait of an old woman, had its origins in the "swarming memory bank" of the poet.

"The result is a fresh, intelligent and moving example of how we might translate people we know, and aspects of the world we inhabit, into poetry. I loved delving into the exquisite layers of this poem, as much as I loved finding my way around its mysterious spaces," said Ms Green.

Speaking after the win, Manon Revuelta said the award came as a total surprise.

"When I first found out I didn't believe it. When the news sank in, I felt great. It's a thrill to have my work recognised with this prize," said Manon.

Samuel Flynn Scott, who judged the Lyric Poem entries, said 'Mrs Potts' was a unique and ambitious poem for any age, let alone for a 16-year-old.

"The poem showed wonderful maturity, yet kept the message simple and was all the more poignant for it. A few brave metaphors mixed with an intimate but non-explicit sense of locality had me instantly engaged," said Mr Flynn Scott.

"It is an inherently 'New Zealand' poem, but not self consciously so. Its New Zealand character, however, has nothing to do with it winning – that is all down to the clever understanding of the English language this young poet has shown."

This is the second year New Zealand Post has supported the National Schools Poetry Awards, which is run by Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters, and the first year the Awards were expanded to incorporate two prize categories – Best Poem and Best Lyric.

"The number of entries and their high quality bodes very well for the future of poetry in New Zealand. I look forward to hearing of many more successes and accolades in the years ahead for these two winning poets and their fellow finalists," said John Allen, New Zealand Post Chief Executive.

The Awards are also supported by the New Zealand Book Council, Booksellers New Zealand, the New Zealand Society of Authors, *Tearaway* magazine and the literary magazines, *Sport* and *Landfall*.

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. 160 Year 12 and 13 students from throughout the country will attend the Festival, which includes workshops and seminars with top New Zealand writers.

ENDS

*(Note to Editors: The winning poems are included below
Photography is available directly from Robert Cross Mob 027 5635565
Or Wk 04 4635565)*

For further information please contact:

Keith FitzPatrick
Media Communications Manager
New Zealand Post
04 496 4566
027 453 9882

New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards 2008

Flotsam and Jetsam – Winner, Best Poem

by Manon Revuelta, Epsom Girls' Grammar School, Auckland

She keeps the butter in the freezer
eighty five and fading
It might be to do with Chernobyl
she is as blank and remote as the moon
a cardboard *mamie*
poor little tadpole
thumping through the
fat coiled roots of my unconscious
Freud himself could never fish her out.

Her brother *departed* on Bastille Day
his heart was fast and anxious
like a blind moth
She was very upset
She taught him to walk, you know
he sits grey and correct in a photograph
his face as firm as rope
tiny ghost.

Flotsam and jetsam
suspended in my own crowded sea.

Mrs. Potts – Winner, Best Lyric Poem

By Sonya Clark, Karamu High School, Hastings

I

We spied on her
naked,
washing in the Waiau:
collecting smooth river stones,
bum to the sky.

II

Large
breasts bursting
out of her apron,
like warm apples spilt
from a strudel.

III

The gangs let their pig dogs
loose on her sheep.
The heart stained wool
clung to the grass.

Later I heard her gun

IV

Then saw the dogs swinging
upside down
by their feet.
Tied to the barbed wire fence
by the main road:
heads brushing the grass
but not touching.

V

Cigarettes and chocolate
licked her teeth.

Left on old lips,
were crooked
bite marks
in the skin