WRITE AROUND THE MURRAY 2026

Barry Young River of Stories

2026

Poetry

Winners

BOOKtique

COMMERCIAL CLUB ALBURY

AlburyCity

Rotary Albury Hume District 9790

Hume Bank

office choice

Poetry
Years 3 & 4
Winner
Hayley Agar
The Scots School Albury

My Sister, My Friend

She screams at me and slams the door,
Socks and undies all over the floor,

“Go away,” she yells, “you’re annoying me!
Because of you I bumped my knee,”

It wasn't me, it was not,
I feel my face start to get hot,

And mum is coming, now I’m in trouble
“Tidy this mess up, on the double,”

Picking up toys putting them back on the bed,
Anger rushing through my head,

Making faces across the table,
Wicked sisters like from a fable,

In the day we always fight,
But we like to chat at night,

Giggling together at the day’s end,
When she’s not being my enemy I guess I can call her my friend.

Poetry
Years 5 & 6
Winner
Best Overall Primary School Poem
Octavia Hudson
Lavington Public School

My Hero

Her eyes are like cocoa drops,
With chocolate curls pulled out of the way.
Her eye shields
Keep her freckled face from sight.
With many talents,
My closest friend
Has always
Been there for me,
And through all this
She has time
For drama, dance and chess.
She is bright, flexible and
Cunning.
My excellent friend
The chess champion
The lead dancer
The top actor,
Never failing to show up.

Poetry
Years 7 & 8
Winner
Mila Oats
Catholic College Wodonga

Homework Mate

Homework marched in, rough and tall,
A mountain of maths, the worst of all.
It waved its worksheets through the air,
"I'll beat you both!" it seemed to swear.

Then in burst my fearless mate,
Three pencils late—but never too late.
Armed with snacks and endless jokes,
And battle cries that made us choke.

The ruler became a mighty sword,
The backpack transformed to a cardboard fort.
Rubbers flew like cannonballs,
Sticky notes covered the walls.

The science questions tried to attack,
The history facts struck from the back.
Hours later, the battle was through.
Homework cried, "I surrender to you!"

Hours later, the fight was done.
The homework sighed, completely outdone.
It wasn't because we knew every rule—
It lost because friends make hard things cool.

So, if homework comes for me tonight,
With endless pages left to write,
I'll call my friend without delay…
Because every hero needs a mate to save the day.

Poetry
Years 9 & 10
Winner
Best Overall Secondary School Poem
Thali Oldmeadow
Catholic College Wodonga

Boys Will Be Boys – He Just Likes You

In grade one, he shoved me hard off the swing,
I scraped both my knees, couldn't feel a thing
But the sting in my chest when the teacher looked down
And smiled like pain was just part of the playground.
"Boys will be boys," she said with a grin,
"He probably just likes you. It's how they begin."

In grade three, they laughed as they snapped at my back,
Little hands grabbing what they knew I lacked
Power, safety, the right to say no.
I told the teacher, voice trembling, low.
"He probably just likes you," she said once more,
"Boys will be boys," as I stared at the floor.

By fifth grade, I had bruises I couldn't explain,
Not just on my skin, but deep in my brain.
He called me fat, said to skip every meal,
Hit me so often I stopped trying to heal.
But what would I say? I already knew
"He probably just likes you." That made it true.

I swallowed it down like sour old tea,
This poison they'd handed straight into me.
They taught me love was fists and fear,
That pain meant someone wanted you near.
So, I didn't tell, didn't scream, didn't fight
Just learned to be quiet, stay out of sight.

Because "boys will be boys" had become my cage,
A script I recited, page after page.
But now I know better and I am so mad,
At the teachers, the grown-ups, the "he's not that bad."
They let me believe I deserved every hit,
That my body was there for hands and for spit.

No more excuses wrapped up in lies,
No more silence when a young girl cries.
"Boys will be boys" should never explain
A lifetime of guilt, a childhood of pain.
I was not a crush, I was not a game,
I was a child and you fed me shame.

But now I speak up, and now I see
That love is never supposed to hurt me.
So, teach them better, teach them to care,
That “no” means “no,” that bruises aren’t fair.
And stop using phrases that silence our voice
“Boys will be boys” is a dangerous choice.

Poetry
Years 11 & 12
Winner
Abigail Karslake
Albury High School

The Mobile Friend

The musical spans eighteen years in my dream
Muscles ache as legs are shoved into the aisle
I don't move, not at all

I've always loved the theatre, but it's never been mine
The stage is where the others shine
I just become familiar with the sea of velvet

Bombarded by creaky floors, bright lights, a bone deep rhythm
There's nothing like the homemade cacophony of an ensemble

The match lasts several decades
The freckles on my arm transformed into liver spots

I've always loved the hockey, been coming since I was seven
And yet I count the games I've played on my left hand
The ground isn't mine either, I become familiar with the stands
I've learnt the rules, the dictions, and smile with a camera in my grasp

I'm the mobile friend, running from place to place
Either here or there, whatever the case
I follow their shadow, and they hope I don't get lost
They think I'm right behind them
And I am, carefully adjusting the lens to capture

They always notice, slow their pace
Welcome my presence with a smile
And I yield my argus-eyed mindset
Sigh a breath of held-back laughter

The actors all familiar as I read the playbill
Scenes of my life in a fever dream
One I met in primary
One I met in adolescence
One has always just been there

Many have come and gone
Their presence fluctuates
Or maybe I do
Ambulatory in every sense of the word

The curtains draw and stage goes dark
The siren sounds a ring through my skull
They walk towards my seat
I show them the photos

Then in great detail I narrate and convey my vision
The deep etched lines of a constant smile
The glimmer in their eyes when they deliberate
What transpires inside, I coax to the surface

Being the mobile friend is metamorphic
I see it all, there for it all
I glimpse the Adonis in their humanity
And I capture it, never relinquishing