

The standard of entries was generally high. A lot of stories focused on children and there were a number of excellent young adult stories.

Below are general comments on the short-listed stories.

One Hundred Kisses	The story starts with a photographic image of a young girl fleeing across shadows cast by the photographer as she leans over a boardwalk railing. The relevance of this image becomes clear as the story unfolds. The story takes the form of a letter written to her brother who has asked for her forgiveness. The first person narrator becomes the fleeing girl. A very moving story told with striking imagery and insightful characterisation.
Swimming in my Cottontails	First person narrator is a 7 year old who accompanies her uncle while he is working as a headstone engraver. The child's father is in hospital having a major operation, and family secrets are hinted at in the back story. The child's point of view is generally good, but occasionally falters.
A Loyal Knight and True	A young adult story about a girl (Linnet) who falls for the new boy in town. After a motor bike accident she sees Beau (the boy next door) and her eccentric mother in a new light. The author's insight into the main characters makes this fairly hackneyed story come to life. It is refreshing that the heroine of the story hopes her "real mother" would come and save her from her family at the end of the story.
Headlines and Classifieds	A well-constructed humorous story; a spoof murder story. It is fragmented, but this is appropriate to the content. Characters are stereotyped, which is appropriate to the humour. A possible sub-text and authorial comment – the story can be seen as a tongue-in-cheek comment/critique on writers' groups (with or without the possessive mark!)
Redux Now	Dramatic opening: Good Show Don't Tell. Mystery-girl (Rosie) leaving her mother –why? We soon learn. Imagery is good. Written in present tense. Pace slows during train journey. Use of symbolism, reference to earthquakes and tsunamis. Recurrence of graffiti message Redux Now which Rosie defines as "To return when you know you should". The real meaning is not important – it is Rosie's perception of the meaning that is important. A power story and moving story.

Pippa Kay

Judge