

Creative writing – Lower Primary and Primary

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This year's theme of Australian Biodiversity was embraced enthusiastically by primary school students. The term biodiversity is presently fashionable and many people and students use it vaguely to refer to anything to do with the natural world. *The Bird Observer* (May 2010) defined biodiversity as 'the variety of species, the variety of genetic material within a species and ecosystem diversity. Quantifying the diversity of plants and animals within Australia could further illustrate understanding of biodiversity. Australia is home to more than 560 000 species and many found nowhere else on earth.'

While many students did not quite come to grips with this definition, they energetically researched, wrote stories and created beautiful illustrations using the four set topics. Of course, the popular topics were *Give me a home amongst the gum trees* and *My island home* – both being popular songs which immediately resonated with primary students. However some of the most interesting picture story books were created when students took on the challenging topics, *Up through the ground they came* and *In the darkness I sensed...*

Each year, students constantly push the boundaries of the illustration criteria which states '*pictures must be hand drawn or produced on a computer. Clip Art, downloaded illustrations or photographs won't rate highly and may infringe copyright requirements*'. Some students have produced beautiful mosaic pictures using natural materials and laminated the results. The thickness of these books always creates a problem when posting entries to judges across the state. It was good to see more students incorporating poetry and trialling different genre into their entries. There remain the few students, and their teachers, who do not read the criteria and choose topics outside the listed four or fail to meet the word count.

Congratulations to all student writers and illustrators. The judges and I enjoyed the picture story books immensely. Congratulations to the twenty-one judges who assessed the hundreds of entries in a very short time allowing me to complete the judging recording process punctually. I am looking forward to next year's stories already.