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## Poem about family stories wins National Schools Poetry Award 2023

Liberty Beck, student at Takapuna Grammar, is the 2023 winner of the National Schools Poetry Award. Liberty won the award with her poem *X-MANGOES-X-SNAKES-X-RED PAPER BOATS-X*.

“*X-MANGOES-X-SNAKES-X-RED PAPER BOATS-X*’ is a poem I’ve been writing for a while now, and it’s a story I’ll be writing for a long time,” Liberty says. “Writing this was, in some ways, a meditation—a means of trying to listen to fragments of the stories of my family through others who share and sing it.”

The National Schools Poetry Award is run by Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington’s International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML) with funding from Creative New Zealand, and sponsorship and promotional support from Wonderlab.

“I am still in disbelief and still registering it,” Liberty says of her win. “Sharing writing is often so vulnerable and special.”

Liberty’s poem will go live on The Friday Poem at 2pm on National Poetry Day, Friday 25 August: <https://thespinoff.co.nz/books>.

As the winner of the National Schools Poetry Award, Liberty received a \$500 cash prize, a \$500 book grant for her school library, a year’s membership of the Read NZ Te Pou Muramura, a year’s membership of the New Zealand Society of Authors (NZSA) and a year’s subscription to leading New Zealand literary journal Landfall.

Judge Morgan Bach says “many of the poems/poets were deeply engaged and concerned with the hard and outward looking stuff. When I read these young poets, I feel encouraged that they are better people than us, far less afraid to be who they are, and bolder in their expectation that people should treat each other well.”

Liberty and the other nine finalists will also attend a one-day poetry masterclass at the IIML led by poets Morgan Bach and Leah Dodd.

The other nine finalists are: Charles Ross (Logan Park High School, Dunedin), Andrew Castles (St Andrew’s College, Christchurch), Jonah Cropp (St Andrew’s College, Christchurch), Molly Laurence (Lincoln High School, Lincoln), Layla Hoskin (Tauranga Girls’ College, Tauranga), Sunny Radzyner (Avonside Girls’ High School, Christchurch), Lavenitani Taufu (Aorere College, Auckland), Isabelle Lloyd (St Mary’s College, Auckland) and Oshadha Perera (Southland Boys’ High School, Invercargill).

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You can read these poems on our National Schools Poetry Award website where you will also find the full interview with Liberty Beck:

<https://schoolspoetryaward.co.nz/winners-2023/>