

## Winning poems Robert Burns Poetry Competition

### Youth Poets section:

1<sup>st</sup> place winner: Ioana Manoa, Auckland

#### Leaves Fall as the Roots Grow

Define your identity.  
Select your ethnicity.  
New Zealand Census -  
we sense this: a cultural separation  
based on an ancestor's migration.  
Putting us at cultural crossroads  
to cross a box,  
to shade it with pale pink, or brown skin-coloured pencil.  
Tick one, choose one:  
New Zealand/Europe-an, Maori, Chinese or Samo-an.  
Fit me in a box, wool press me, family pack me, quarter pack me.  
Afa-kasi.

My ancestors.  
Cargo, go, go  
offshore,  
for shore.

New Zealand/European.  
Shade this the colour of  
top hats, coat tails, corsets, pipes,  
tartan kilts, buchanan stripes,  
organs, hymns, pews and pedals,  
parade of clans, jigs and thistles.

Trunks, cases, lockets in hand,  
farewell to family, off to new land.  
*Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales,*  
*inside, outside, the immigrants sail.*  
Starboard, stern, port and bow,  
home-sick voyage to the long white cloud.

Scotsman, miner, minister, preacher.  
George Morrison my brave ancestor.  
George walked ten miles to the Carluke mines.  
George worked ten hours in the hellish mines.  
To set sail, he set his mind,  
the coal mines to leave behind.  
From the brick works, mines and working class,  
miner to missionary - at last.

*For Auld Lang Syne, my dear*

*We've sailed twelve thousand weary mile  
Since auld lang syne  
And seas between us broad have roared  
For auld lang syne*

My ancestors.  
Cargo, go, go  
offshore,  
for shore.

Samoaan  
Shade this the colour of  
Fa'a Samoa  
Lavalava  
Siva siva  
Sapelu  
Frangipani  
White puletasi  
Papalagi

Fa'a Samoa  
Lavalava  
loosely tied to the side  
lavalava in the fale  
lavalava to the school  
lavalava playing the kilikiti

Siva siva  
the wide feet of my people  
the fire dancer  
the slap slap

Machete  
machete harvest the coconut  
machete crack the coconut  
machete open the can  
machete mow the lawn

Frangipani  
behind the left ear  
behind the right ear  
behind the fale

White puletasi  
women in white for church, wide brimmed hat  
women's fans fasi  
Amene.

Papalagi  
fia palagi

wanna be palagi.  
PI, so fly  
2000 miles.

Tofa to the homeland.  
Samoan to English to Te Reo Maori.  
Young boy sent away, south of the Bombay  
to St Stephens, Hato Tipene.  
From lavalava and singlet to boarding school greys, nomads and bleak days.  
From games in the tropical heat to frosted feet.  
From open fire cooking to mess room meals and tuckshop deals.  
From ocean-side fale to dorm fights and homesick nights.  
Tofa to the homeland,  
where we fished from the sea and lived off the land.  
Tofa, far away to New Zea-land.  
Long distance, plenty remittance.  
To make a living  
with no land and fish from cans.  
White to black sand  
Umu to oven  
Cocoa to coffee  
Talo to potato fries  
Inked thighs to kentucky fried thighs  
Inked thighs  
Tatau, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.

My heritage is the coloured threads of the tartan,  
the wool of the crochet shawl,  
the woven pandanus grass of the fine mat,  
the bark of the tapa cloth.  
Cast on, cast off.  
Count the stitches, weave the mat, under, over.

We are leaves on our family trees.  
We are home grown with strong roots.  
*Don't forget your roots, my friend.*  
*Don't forget your family.*  
Embrace your ethnicities.  
Celebrate your identities.

**2<sup>nd</sup> place winner: Kimberley Garside, Wellington**

### **Withering**

With Dewey eyes the fisherman carved the wrinkles into his face. His peeling hands gripped the sliver of fishing wire sinking into the oceans turmoil, knuckles protruding under weathered skin in effort to hold onto what was slipping away from him. The sudden tugs of the waves yanked the line embedding it into his palm yet this did not deter him. His blood had long ago abandoned him as well as his heart. What was left was a shell of a man, possessed by the bitter winds tussling the remaining strands of grey hair clinging to his pale scalp.

3<sup>rd</sup> place winner: Tessa Hadfield, Andersons Bay, Dunedin

*A breezy romance*

*There's only a body bodie fa can numb mah pain*

(There's only one person who can numb my pain)

*A bodie fa smells loch rose an' rain*

(A person who smells like roses and rain)

*Under th' moon an' th' auld pine trees*

(Under the moon and the old pine trees)

*He whispers softly tae me in th' breeze*

(He whispers softly to me in the breeze)

*He softly strokes mah tear stained coocon*

(He softly strokes my tear stained face)

*An' holds me tightly in his embrace*

(And holds me tightly in his embrace)

*He holds mah hain in th' rain*

(He holds my hand in the rain)

*He grip aye fades aw mah pain*

(His grip fades all my pain)

*Ah faa asleep against his chest*

(I fall asleep against his chest)

*His gentle scent oan mah min' is impressed*

(His gentle scent on my mind is impressed)