

GOLDEN APPLE WRITING COMPETITION

2010 COMPOSITION RESULTS

1st Place “Impossible” Sam Wilson, VIC

‘There's no use trying,’ said Alice. ‘One *can't* believe impossible things.’

‘I daresay you haven't had much practice,’ replied the Queen. ‘When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’

The story of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland often comes forward when I reflect on my career as a teacher. Not, because of the childish joy with which one approaches teaching or the dreamlike state in which students appear listening to one of your lectures but in thinking back to my first class, the sense of impossibility with which I approached it and the practice in believing that such classes bring.

The memory of walking past an assembled line of waiting year eight students before stopping at their door and feeling the awareness of twenty-six eyes all-at-once realising that ‘yes, this one is *our* teacher’. Inside, I stood at the front of an expectant silence of twenty-six seated, scrutinising faces. Fifty-two eyes; a paired pack of playing cards scattered and jumbled in amongst each other. Some tall but awkward, or friendly and dishevelled, others short and with blank sombre faces, all in various states of compliance with the school uniform. And me, standing there, no longer playing a part, no longer in front of another teacher’s class, no longer at a university playing talking about teaching. Here I was teaching. It felt like being sucked down a rabbit hole and into a surreal dream but, like the Queen’s believing, there I *was*, teaching. There may not have been six impossible things but there were small triumphs. There was the gentle quashing of a forceful, inalienable assertion (that upon marriage girls *had* to take boys names), the conjuring of a volunteer reader from an ocean of becalmed hands, the frenzied stymieing of blood from a running summer nose and finally the unravelling and cascading of ideas about a book many had even yet to read. I arrived small and doubting and left tired, hungry and believing.

As teachers I think we have cause to believe in impossible things and, in light of our challenge and with more cause, to take breakfast. We accomplish things which others may think impossible, we take on impossible challenges every day and we really *try*. In many instances we pursue achievements in students which, while difficult and to common appearance unlikely, are *not impossible*. That day, as I arrived back at my office and I slumped into my chair I reflected that in teaching there was nothing which was impossible and, looking down into my bag and remembering my forgotten apple and sandwich, that I had come to this realisation without having yet eaten my breakfast.

2nd Place “Teaching – Unexpected Rewards” Ezio Paccioco, VIC

His name was Damien – the name itself conjured up the devil. He was nasty, loved seeing younger boys in pain - he was disliked even by his friends!

By the time he reached Year 11, his reputation for “pushing the envelop” was renowned. You could not pin any evidence on him directly but where there was trouble, Damien was in the vicinity. He

would question everything and everyone. He was niggly and challenging, which was an understatement! When he managed to pass VCE – you could hear the sigh of relief from all the VCE teachers. Good riddance to a painful student!

Fast forward 20 years at a Reunion of past students. I slightly winced when I noticed Damien, but as the evening continued, we crossed paths and shook hands.

“Hi Damien. How’s it going?”

“Good” came the reply.

“I’m surprised to see you. I thought you’d be in jail!”

“Me too,” he said.

“Well, Damien, what are you doing?” I asked gaining confidence.

“I’m a Sargeant in the Police Force. I have my own station in the country at Euroa.”

Goodness, Kelly country. That’s apt.

3rd Place “Midwife” Derya Kucukali – Helou, VIC

I was to become a nurse, a midwife to be precise. It was my first year at university and although I excelled through all the theory I dismally failed in practice as I was unable to inject a silicon bottom and take my friends blood pressure without spilling out a reading that would have made her comatose. I decided I needed a change and opted for a Biological Science degree (thanks to my husband’s influence, as it meant more contact hours with him!). After three years of white lab coats, nerdy goggles and microscopes I was determined not to be confined to a laboratory for the rest of my working life and decided to take the next step; to become a teacher. I worked as a religion studies teacher at my local mosque during my university years. It was there that I realised that I have a gift. I have the ability to relay information in a manner which engaged the students and touched their hearts. I had the ability to form an instant rapport with my girls. I knew this science degree needed to be taught. Eight years later and I’ve never looked back. I was destined to be an educator.

We’ve all been affected by teachers in our lives... the one who yelled “detention!” because I replied “you’re welcome” to a friend who said “thank you” for sharing my text book. The teacher who said “I’ll let you off this time” when he found a four page history essay under my jumper during a test, or the math teacher who changed my outlook on a subject that I thought I could never get above a C grade. My unforgettable year 10 English teacher whose face was indescribably red after I asked him the definition of a word in a text we were studying and replied “I think you’d better look that up in the dictionary”.

Students which I taught only five years ago approach me and comment on things that they’ve never forgotten because of an example I may have given to help them understand. I had one ex-student who FaceBooked me saying they could not forget the way I taught them about the respiratory system by performing an on the spur of the moment rap song to ensure the information sank in prior to the test.

The desire to deliver knowledge and mould students so that they may reach their true potential is the driving force which leads the profession to thrive. I have this desire, and I’m here to stay.....