



CAIRNS EISTEDDFOD

Cairns and District
Junior Eisteddfod Association

cairnseisteddfod.org

SET POETRY 2025

SPEECH & DRAMA

S1 CHORIC SPEAKING – GRADES 4 to 6

THE SERPENT

Theodore Roethke

There was a Serpent who had to sing.
There was. There was.
He simply gave up Serpentine.
Because. Because.

He didn't like his kind of Life;
He couldn't find a proper Wife;
He was a Serpent with a soul;
He got no Pleasure down his hole,
And so, of course, he had to Sing,
And Sing he did, like Anything!
The Birds, they were, they were Astounded;
And various Measures Propounded
To stop the Serpent's Awful Racket:
They bought a Drum. He wouldn't Whack it.
They sent, - you always send, - to Cuba
And got a Most Commodious Tuba;
They got a Horn, they got a Flute,
But Nothing would suit.
He said, 'Look, Birds, all this is futile:
I do *not* like to Bang or Tootle.'
And then he cut loose with a Horrible Note
That practically split the Top of his Throat.
'You see,' he said, with a Serpent's Leer,
I'm Serious about my Singing Career!
And the Woods Resounded with many a Shriek
As the Birds flew off to the End of Next Week.

S1 CHORIC SPEAKING – GRADES 4 to 6

A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT. - Felix Leigh

The slumberous Sloth hung upside-down
From a bough of the Twigsome Tree,
And through the forest on pointed toes
Came the Spensive Spideree.

She climbed the trunk in a trice, and cried,
“Now here is a chance for me!
I will weave my web without more ado
‘Twixt the Sloth and the Twigsome Tree!”

A line she tied to the sleeper’s nose,
And she toiled from ten till three.
And the Sloth awoke with a snort, and saw
The word of the Spideree.

He watched her feast on a tangled fly,
And capture a bumble-bee.
“If I move,” he thought, “I shall surely tear
Her web from the Twigsome Tree.”

“I long have wanted a sound excuse
For inaction,” murmured he;
“Now I’ll stir no more, for I CAN’T disturb
This excellent Spideree!”

So HE hangs there, and SHE spreads her snare,
And it is, they both agree,
The best of all probable, possible worlds
Aloft in the Twigsome Tree!

S2 CHORIC SPEAKING – GRADES 1 to 3

AN AUSTRALIAN LULLABY - Margaret Scott

Up in a gum tree gaunt and high,
A baby possum swings neath the sky.
While the grey old sea croons a lullaby:
“Sleep, little possum, hush-a-by,
Swinging under the star-lit sky.”

The Moon-man has silvered the wattle-trees,
That softly sway to the evening breeze;
Put out your lamp, dear Moon-man, please.
Lest some wandering hunter sees
Little grey possum nursed by the trees.

Mopokes have hooted a last good-night,
Ere they swoop away on a noiseless flight.
Little grey possum fades from sight
(or is it because my eyes are shut tight?)
Dear little possum, good-night, good-night.

S2 CHORIC SPEAKING – GRADES 1 to 3

A SMILE.

Jez Alborough

Smiling is infectious,
You catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner
And someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized
I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about my smile and then
I realised its worth.
A single smile like mine could travel
Right around the earth.

If you feel a smile begin
Don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick
And get the world infected.

S3 SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP – GRADES 10 to 12

COAL FIRE.

Louis Untermeyer

And once, in some swamp-forest, there were trees.
Before the first fox thought to run,
These dead black chips were one
Green net to hold the sun.
Each leaf in turn was taught the right way to drink light;
The twigs were made to learn
How to catch flame and yet not burn;
Branch and then bough began to eat their diet of heat.
And so for years, six millions years, or high,
They held that fire.
And here, out of the splinters that remain,
The fire is loose again.
See how its hundred hands reach here and there,
Finger the air,
Then growing bolder, twisting free
It fastens on the remnants of the tree
And, one by one,
Consumes them; mounts beyond them; leaps, is done:
And goes back to the sun.
The fire is loose again.
See how its hundred hands reach here and there,
Finger the air;
Then growing bolder, twisting free,
It fastens on the remnants of the tree
And, one by one,
Consumes them; mounts beyond them; leaps; is done:
And goes back to the sun.

S4 JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP – GRADES 7 to 9

A TRUE BLUE AUSSIE BARBIE.

Valerie Warwick

Today we're having a Barbie
So Mum's in a terrible flap.
Our Dad was made to chop onions
And Nan was sent off for a nap.

My job, was to sweep up the yard
Whilst my brother mowed the front lawn.
It's only a simple barbie
Yet we've ALL been at it since dawn!

First to arrive was Uncle Bruce
But guess who carried his six-pack?
Aunt Rose, with the feeble excuse,
"Poor Brucey, he has a crook back."

The family chatted and joked
Then out rang an almighty cheer,
Cousin Ted had arrived with prawns
But why yell? He does that each year!

Now, everything seemed to be beaut,
Till our Kenneth elbowed Aunt Bess.
By knocking the glass from her hand
Red wine sloshed all over her dress.

"Put water on it," called a voice,
But Bess just yelled, *"I'm wet enough!"*
She scowled at Kenneth, kicked his shin,
Then turned and stalked off in a huff.

They ranted, they raved and they sang.
Aunt Rose did her dance with the scarf.
My brother and I thought "How dumb."
Yet everyone else seemed to laugh.

Then Grandpa presented *HIS JOKE*,
The one where he takes out his teeth.
That brought it to the finale,
To me and my brother's relief!

But one thing they all agreed, t'was
'A TRUE BLUE BARBIE FOR AUSSIES!'
Then everyone left with a smile
Plus a few bites from the mozzies.

S5 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 10 to 12

THE LIBEL.

John O'Brien

"The flowers have no scent, and the birds have no song,"
We read in the lesson before us,
While carols enchanted came floating along,
And lifted our hearts in the chorus.

"The landscape is sombre, and dreary, and gray,
No colour its mantle adorning;"
O'er carpets spread far in a golden array
We tramped it to school in the morning.

"The flowers have no scent," but the wattle we brought
From hill-sides and glens where we found it
Was filling the room with its glory, we thought,
And wafting its sweetness around it.

And fragrant the greeting the eucalypts threw
From branches of amber and sorrel;
While hard by the door a pittosporum grew –
We called it "The Japanese Laurel."

"The birds have no song, "so they told us at school;
But sweet in our souls was the ringing
Of notes soft and clear from the edge of the pool,
Where dainty day thrushes were singing.

The magpie, the spink, and the pretty blue wren,
The butcher-bird up in his eyrie,
The trills! Oh, I wish I could hear you again,
My dear little Chocolate Wiree!

To the ears of a stranger our birds may lack song,
Our flowers have no scent for the alien;
But we, who have rambled the gullies along
Bedecked in soft colours Australian,

We laugh them to scorn as we read the old phrase-
We've laughed, since, at many another –
And bless in our hearts in a chorus of praise
The face of our happy young mother.

S5 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 10 to 12

SWANS - Roger McGough

Swans have class written all over them.

Oh, I could go on and on
About the beauty of the swan.
Aristocracy and no mistake
The way they lord it round the lake.

Poets love them. The bell-beat
Of their wings. The softness of the breast.
Voiceless and safely distant
Where Beauty is at its best.

Poets love them. But not this one.
What others see as graceful elegance
I see as po-faced arrogance.
With a neck like a stunted giraffe
And a beak that glows like a Satsuma
You'd think they'd enjoy a good laugh
But they're completely devoid of humour.

For instance: Name a cartoon swan.
Can anybody do swan impressions?
Pull a swan face?
Anybody know any swan jokes?

*'I say, I say I say.....
'Why won't a swan go on the lake when it's choppy?'
'Because it can't admire its reflection in the water.'*

(I was told that one by a duck.)

All that swans are good for
Is swanning around
Like little girls in pretty dresses
Imitating doomed princesses.

I speak not in jest

For there's no denying
That swans are at their best
On stage, when dying.

S6 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 10 to 12

THE BLACK SWAN ON THE RIVER. - Roger Tulloch

The Koalas are in their old gumtree;
There are Galahs as far as you can see,
The Wedgetail Eagle's flying free,
And the Black Swan's on the river.

The wombat's on his dusty plain;
The emu waits and waits for rain;
While dingoes guard their hot domain,
And the Black Swan's on the river.

The Major Mitchell Cockatoos
Shriek insults at the Big Red roos
The Quokkas and the Potoroos
And the Black Swan's on the river.

The Platypus and the Lyrebird
Ask the Echidna: "have you heard?..."
"I know" he snaps, "don't be absurd."
The Black Swan's on the river.

Tasmanian Devils snap and growl.
"Be quiet," says the Boobook Owl.
"Shush!" says the Quoll, with a fearsome scowl,
"The Black Swan's on the river."

These creatures, I am sure, agree
It's up to folk like you and me
To make sure that there'll always be
A black Swan on the river.

S6 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 7 to 9

VOLCANO. - Christopher Mann

Under the cold ash-peak,
Under a crown of fitful flowers,
He sleeps,

Under the silent crust,
Welded and twisted from ancient meanders
And bitter lakes of fluid rock,
He sleeps.

Coiled, black, hissing,
Curled, dark, hissing,
Waiting while time whirls slowly past.

(A thousand years
In the blink of a slow stone eye.)

Rain washes his back,
Smoothing mud into the crevices,
Helping grass to dress him in summer clothing.

Trees clutch him with fingered roots,
But never deep enough to spoil his sleep,
Never deep enough to ruffle his hot dreams.

But once upon a time, just as a soft summer
Is folding itself into autumn,
His hiss becomes a roar,
His skin cracks and stretches,
His black jaws open in a vast and fiery yawn.

The surprised grass crackles and blackens,
And floats away;
Trees wave like torches and dissolve;
His skin heaves and splits,
Folds and breaks
As the snake swiftly rises,
And tumbles and rumbles
Into the broken and burning valley.

Up into the sky
On wings that cover the sun,
The black dragon flies.

Sourced from "First Poems", 1979. Cape Town: Bateleur Press

S7 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 3 to 6

THE VISITOR. -

Ian Serrailier

A crumbling churchyard, the sea and the moon;
The waves had gouged out grave and bone;
A man was walking, late and alone ..

He saw a skeleton on the ground;
A ring on a bony finger he found.

He ran home to his wife and gave her the ring.
'Oh, where did you get?' He said not a thing.

'It's the loveliest ring in the world,' she said,
As it glowed on her finger. They slipped off to bed.

At midnight they woke. In the dark outside,
'Give me my ring!' a chill voice cried.

'What was that, William? What did it say?'
'Don't worry, my dear. It'll soon go away.'

'I'm coming!' A skeleton opened the door.
'Give me my ring!' It was crossing the floor.

'What was that, William? What did it say?'
'Don't worry, my dear. It'll soon go away.'

'I'm reaching you now! I'm climbing the bed.'
The wife pulled the sheet right over her head.

It was torn from her grasp and tossed in the air:
'I'll drag you out of bed by the hair!'

'What was that, William? What did it say?'
'Throw the ring through the window! THROW IT AWAY!'

She threw it. The skeleton leapt from the sill,
Scooped up the ring and clattered downhill,
Fainter ... and fainter ... Then all was still.

S7 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES 3 to 6

ARE WE THERE YET?

-

Lyn Hurry

Are we there yet?
Can we stop now?
This is boring,
We've played our games and counted cars
Now we're sitting yawning.

How much further?
Nearly there yet?
It's boring – did we mention?
We're strapped in tight, can hardly move,
Driving's like detention.

The only animals we've seen
Are very dead or flat.
Stop hitting me! That gameboy's mine!
Mum make her give it back.

Did we agree to sit and smile –
To be quiet all the way?
We'd almost rather be at home
Than trapped in here all ay.

Nobody hears us here in jail
With nothing left to eat.
Imagine we are pilots ejecting
From our seats.

Be quiet! Be Quiet! Don't make a fuss!
We're forced to sit and think.
The trees rush past, it's getting dark
We need something to drink.

What did you say?
Another hour!
We're dying – it's too far!

When WE can drive, we'll strap THEM in
And never
Never
Never
NEVER stop the car!

S8 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES Prep to 2

WHEN DADDY SAT ON THE TOMATOES.

Jack Prelutsky.

When Daddy sat on the tomatoes
That somebody put on his chair,
He shot from that seat like a rocket
And practically flew through the air.
I thought he would go through the ceiling.
“Who did that! Who did that!” he roared.
If there were awards for conniptions,
Then he would have won the award.

He ranted all over the kitchen
And did a ridiculous dance.
He really was something to look at,
Tomato all over his pants.
He raved like a ruffled old rooster,
He growled like a furious bear,
The time he sat on the tomatoes
That somebody put on his chair.

S8 AGE GROUP SET POEM – GRADES Prep to 2

AND THE KOOKABURRA LAUGHED. - Ann Davis

I walked along the old bush track
A load of knowledge on my back,
The flowers waved as I passed by,
The sun shone from a perfect sky.
Overhead a hawk was flying,
Came the sound of magpie's crying,
Then the croaking of a frog
Perched upon a fallen log.

As water lapped the riverbank
I heard a distant bell go "clank",
I hurried through the schoolyard gate
Relieved to find I was not late.
I hated so to go inside
Where skies became a window wide,
And friends I'd met along the way
Would vanish by the end of day.

I shrugged and smiled, made up my mind
To leave this lovely day behind.
A Kookaburra in a tree
Pretended not to notice me;
He didn't care about my woes,
He laughed aloud because he knows
While I'm in the classroom, locked away,
He has the *freedom* of the day!