

Judge's Report – Elena de Roo

For this competition, tamariki, aged 5—12 years, were asked to write a poem about Cornwall Park inspired by their own experiences there, to celebrate 125 years since Cornwall Park was gifted to the people of Aotearoa by Sir John Logan Campbell.

What an amazing range of Cornwall Park experiences and poetic forms were represented by the entries that came flooding in—poems showing the changing face of the park through the seasons; poems taking us back in time; poems about biking, roller skating, running and playing cricket; acrostic poems, haikus and even a limerick. There were so many creative and skillfully written poems, it was extremely hard to choose just three.

Before I made my final choices, I created a longlist of poems that stood out to me for various reasons:

The Green of Cornwall Park - Ieti (10 years) from Oranga School.

What an wonderfully evocative simile and last line—'*...kids run around like lolly scrambles.*' When I read this, I could straight away see tamariki running excitedly in every direction.

The Heart of the Park - Daisy (10 years)

This poem's title stood out for its musicality and meaning. The poem also ends with an equally memorable rhyming couplet: '*...for at Cornwall park you see, / Life unfolds dynamically.*'

Untitled Cornwall Park poem - Zoe (6 years)

I loved the free-wheeling feel of the chorus:

'...Cornwall Park oh Cornwall Park oh / Cornwall Park is where I want to go...'

The Moreton Bay Fig - Camilla Chapman (7 years)

What an absolutely beautiful image this poet has created of the gigantic Moreton Bay Fig trees in the park: '*In spring, the Moreton Bay Fig weeps / green and brown twisted branches / that transform into staircases, a balance beam / and little rooms...*'

Maungakiekie Pā - Boyi Yujin (Age 11)

This skilfully written and atmospheric poem blurs the line between past and present, transporting me back to an earlier time: '*Tourists, talkers and walkers roam Cornwall Park. / Māori warriors watch.*'

Cornwall Park - Yuvi (8 years old)

Congratulations on writing a poem in near perfect rhythm and rhyme—not an easy thing to do: '*...The trees danced softly in the breeze, / And flowers bloomed beside the trees / The view was beautiful and bright, / It filled my heart with pure delight / The green, green grass was soft to tread, / With blue skies stretching overhead...*'

Untitled Cornwall Park poem - Zayah (8 years)

Great use of repetition to create a lovely sing-song rhythm that goes perfectly with the topic of a game of hide and seek: *'As I hide behind the tree, the tree / I wait for my friends to see, to see / That I am hidden and watching them, / On the grass of Cornwall Park...'*

Where am I from, you ask? - Isabelle (11 years)

I love the way this poem answers the question posed by the title by starting each stanza with the repeating line *'I come from a place...'* It wholeheartedly embraces the theme by beginning with the poet's special memories of Cornwall Park and ending with the lines: *'...A special place that holds all my memories since my birth to now. / Cornwall Park, Aotearoa.'*

Cornwall Park - Rose (10 Years)

This short haiku-like poem shows that a poem doesn't need to be long to pack a punch (or a picnic): *'Superb picnic spot. / Birds chirping, people laughing. / People having fun.'*

Cornwall Park - Anna (9 years)

This poem is full of energy, whizzing the reader along on an exhilarating roller skate ride through Cornwall Park: *'...The twigs snap as I hear my wheels roar. / As the leaves go by pushed by summer air, / I'd trade no place in the world for here...'*

The wind whips through the trees – Noah (11 years)

Through creative imagery and use of the senses, this poem gave me a real feeling of the open expanse of the Cornwall Park Cricket ground: *'...The grass is like a piece of green fabric, the blades moving in unison / An old cricket ball rolls across the ground, forgotten in time... / The sound of bat hitting ball is prominent, as kids are practice their game... / Scents of plants fill the air / Home is far, but it feels close...'*

The Magical Sheep of Cornwall Park - Ruyan (12 years)

This appealing, quirky poem with clever rhymes and heart, captures a special moment with a young lamb on the other side of the fence: *'...I took out my camera to capture this moment, / Usually the sheep would think I'm an opponent!...'*

Cornwall Park Through Every Season - Anna (10 years)

Using wonderfully descriptive language, *'Sheep huddle together against frosty stonewalls, glistening with rain, / While runners splash between puddles, mirroring glossy green leaves.'*, this poem takes us on a journey through the seasons, where each seasonal stanza starts with its own pop of onomatopoeic sound: *'Tweet, tweet... Swoosh, flutter... Crunch, crackle... Pitter-patter'*

Cornwall Park Through the Seasons – Aaron (12 years)

The poet's careful choice of words gives a beautiful musicality to the lines of this poem: *'Winter drapes the fields in silver mist, / where every treasured memory quietly persists...'*

Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring – Amy (11 years)

I liked the way the title, repeated at the beginning of each season's stanza, links the poem and the seasons of the year together; also, the beautiful images this poem created for me as I read it: *'...leaves fall down like confetti blowing by the wild wind.'*

Where seasons sing – Dhriti (12 years)

A beautifully written acrostic poem with words that sing like Tūi: *'On and on, the trees sway to the breeze, while tūi weave songs that sound like magic spells ... / Now Kōanga awakens the whenua, bringing blossoms buzzing bees, and a sprinkle of magic. / When Raumati brings the heat shady trees stretch their long tiered arms / As Ngahuru arrives, colourful leaves tumble down, painting rainbows on the ground / Last comes Takurua, wrapping Cornwall Park like a soft blanket, spreading quiet mist and crisp mornings beneath the waking rangi.'*

Each poem is a portal into the writer's unique way of seeing the world and my congratulations goes to everyone who entered. I enjoyed reading all your poems but, in the end, it was the poems that gave me an insight into the poet's personal Cornwall Park story, that I kept coming back to.

Highly Commended

My Cornwall Park Run by Hudson (6 years)

This tiny poem made me smile. It jogs along cheerfully, reminding us it's all about the journey and the little things we look forward to, like the weekly ritual of a breakfast bap and a relax in the band rotunda after a run, rather than the destination, or coming in first.

Cornwall Park brings me joy by Zuri (9 years)

'Cornwall Park is open' — from its first line this poem invites us along on a journey through Cornwall Park at sunset as the light slowly fades, flickers and goes. It's lyrical lines evoke the sounds, smells and images of the park at dusk; allowing the reader to see the park through the poet's eyes and feel her happiness at the gate being open.

Winning Poem

(Untitled) by Isla (12 years)

This poem is both simple and complicated. It begins, straightforwardly, with the poet's personal story of Cornwall park and what it means to her, but then, in the space of two lines, seamlessly connects her story to the footsteps of the past and the park's founder, Sir John Logan Campbell. Then, in an all-encompassing last line, the poem brings us 'home' again—*'Cornwall Park is home outdoors'*.