

27 November 2017

2017 Young Writers Award winners announced

The winners of Queensland's most prestigious award for young writers were revealed on Saturday 25 November as part of the inaugural Young Writers Conference at State Library of Queensland (SLQ).

Jonathan O'Brien, a writer and creative producer from Graceville, and Eight Mile Plains teenager, Gina Song, were presented with their prizes by State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald at a special ceremony.

Jonathan O'Brien, 21, won \$2,000 and membership to Queensland Writers Centre in the 18–25 years category for his clever and original entry, *Every Idea I Had For My Australian Literature Short Story Collection*. The judges praised the story for using “an experimental form to take chances and surprise the reader,” declaring it “the stand-out entry this year”.

Gina Song, 17, received \$500 and membership to Queensland Writers Centre in the category for writers aged 15–17. The judges said her story *We Cut Strings* was “the clear winner” in this age group because it “contained a powerful metaphor,” and the characters were “balanced with beautiful detail to give the story a strong, narrative progression”.

The 2017 runners up are Zarin Nuzhat, 22 from Kuraby, and Jesse Hyden, 17 from Redlynch in North Queensland.

Ms McDonald said State Library was proud of its long history of nurturing emerging literary talent in Queensland through the Young Writers Award, which has been running for more than 20 years.

“The award is a platform to recognise and encourage the literary aspirations of young people, and champion the stories of Queenslanders,” Ms McDonald said.

“The Young Writers Award has laid the path toward publication for some of the state's most exciting new literary talent, including former winners and finalists such as Shastra Deo, Rebecca Jessen and Lech Blaine, who returned to State Library to share their expertise at the Young Writers Conference.

“The Young Writers Award supports and promotes writers at a critical stage of their professional and artistic development and is just one of State Library's many commitments to fostering a strong writing community in Queensland,” Ms McDonald said.

SLQ received more than 320 entries for the 2017 Young Writers Award from across Queensland, with 20% of entries coming from regional writers based in the likes of Goondiwindi, Cecil Plains, Taroomball, Longreach, Mackay, Mount Pleasant, Proserpine, Mission Beach, and Redlynch.

The 2017 Young Writers Award winners and finalists are:

Writers aged 18-25

Winner

Every Idea I Had For My Australian Literature Short Story Collection by Jonathan O'Brien, 21

Runner up

Mango Chutney by Zarin Nuzhat, 22

Highly Commended

Return by Grace McCarter, 25
how to: save the world by Eliza Copeland, 22
A Dance of Paper Cranes by Alison Utting, 19

Writers aged 15-17

Winner

We Cut Strings by Gina Song, 17

Runner up

The Lucky Country by Jesse Hyden, 17

Highly Commended

Tie a Knot by Daniel Scott, 17

Anh Nhu by Jenny Nguyen, 16

Mutiny on the Boundary by Campbell Glaves, 17

Roses and Thorns by Kate Lockyer, 17

The Young Writers Award is open to Queensland residents aged 15 to 25 years. Winning stories are available online at www.slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on/awards/ywa. The 2018 call for entries will open mid-year.

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Interviews and images are available upon request.