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## Poem exploring diasporic identity wins the 2024 National Schools Poetry Award

Chantelle Xiong, a Year 13 student at St Andrew's College in Christchurch, is the winner of the 2024 National Schools Poetry Award. Chantelle won the award with her poem 'But i wish /.', which explores diasporic identity.



*Chantelle Xiong*

"The poem highlights how those with differences have to overcome so much just to be comfortable with their own identity," Chantelle says. "It's hard to write about diasporic identities because there's just so much to say and you have to stop yourself from getting carried away. Most of the poem was cultivated by my personal experiences, and of course, that makes me feel a certain vulnerability in sharing it. I was surprised, to say the least, to have won."

The National Schools Poetry Award is run by Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML) with funding from Creative New Zealand, and sponsorship and promotional support from Wonderlab.

Judge Joan Fleming says, "The bullying and the cruel asides the poem captures are often blunt, though the poem is anything but. It is spare, compressed, and tonally complex, and it is formally inventive in a truly memorable way. This poem burred in my mind immediately, and the more I returned to it, the more its sophisticated rendering of self-reclamation revealed itself to me."

Chantelle's poem will feature as The Spinoff's Friday Poem on National Poetry Day, Friday 23 August. "I really hope it connects with others," Chantelle says. "That's the goal."

The winning poem, the complete judge's report, and all the shortlisted poems are available on the [National Schools Poetry Award](#) website.

As the winner of the National Schools Poetry Award, Chantelle receives a \$500 cash prize, a \$500 book grant for her school library, a year's membership of Read NZ Te Pou Muramura, a year's membership of the New Zealand Society of Authors (NZSA), and a year's subscription to leading New Zealand literary journal *Landfall*. Chantelle and the other nine finalists will attend a one-day poetry masterclass at the IIML led by poets Joan Fleming and Dani Yourukova.

The other nine finalists are: Charles Ross (Logan Park High School, Dunedin), who is shortlisted for the second year running, Meg Simpson (St Andrew's College, Christchurch), Ysabelle Casimiro (Baradene College, Auckland), Charlotte McKenzie (St Cuthbert's College, Auckland), Toby Holden (Wellington Girls' College), Raphael Ferdinands (St John's College, Hamilton), Freya Furjan (Wellington Girls' College), Greer Castle (Wellington Girls' College), and Joseph Lomani (Rolleston College, Christchurch).

Joan Fleming says, "The ten poems that rose up as the finalists were absolute miracles of excellence."

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