



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

# GREEN-SCHOOLS NATIONAL MARINE CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2026



A MESSAGE FROM THE WAVES



# FOREWORD

Thank you to every student who took part in the annual Green-Schools Global Citizenship Marine Creative Writing Competition, and congratulations to the talented winners whose work is showcased in this booklet. The competition continues to be a real highlight for us each year, and you should all feel incredibly proud of what you've achieved.

We were inspired by a wide range of poems and stories exploring the beauty and wonder of the ocean, personal reflections and experiences, the rich life beneath the waves, and the challenges facing our seas—along with ideas for how we can protect them.

Writing is a powerful way to express ideas and spark change, and the creativity and imagination shown throughout this collection have made it truly special. Your words brought the ocean vividly to life, evoking both joyful memories of time spent by the sea and an important awareness of the work still needed to safeguard our marine environment.

Well done to each of you for using your voices so thoughtfully and creatively. I encourage you all to continue to write and speak up for the natural world.

A sincere thank you also to the teachers and parents/guardians whose encouragement and support helped make this possible.

**Cathy Baxter,**  
**Director of Education and Community Action,**  
**An Taisce**



# Green-Schools

## National Marine Creative Writing Competition 2026

### “A Message from the Waves”

Green-Schools are delighted to celebrate the sixth annual National Marine Creative Writing Competition, which is proudly supported by the Marine Environment section of the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. Each year, we receive hundreds of wonderful poems and short stories, showcasing the imagination and talent of Ireland’s young writers, and their passion for the marine environment.

This year, the competition invited students to explore the idea of “A message from the waves”. We received a huge range of imaginative entries, from poems about the ocean trying to tell us to clean up our plastic litter and protect its marine life, to stories of talking octopus, and mysterious messages washed up on the beach. As usual, the judges were blown away by the creativity, imagination and passion of the young writers. In this anthology, you can read the top twelve competition entries which were carefully chosen from the two-hundred and fifty-one fantastic submissions received. We hope you enjoy “A Message from the Waves”!

## PRIZES

The prizes for four national winners include a trophy, a €100 book token, a whale/dolphin adoption from the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and €100 to go towards a creative writing workshop for their class, or their Green-Schools activities. There are also prizes for 2nd and 3rd place in each category! Winning entries were shared as part of Green-Schools Marine Week in April – a week of online activities celebrating our oceans!

## CATEGORIES

There were four age categories for entries:

- 1st & 2nd class
- 3rd & 4th class
- 5th & 6th class
- Secondary School

## JUDGES

- Catherine Gaul, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
- Anna Bonner, Poetry Ireland
- Cathy Baxter, An Taisce
- Joanne Scott, Green-Schools Manager



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# Winners

## 1st & 2nd CLASS

**1st place:** Theo Kennedy, Kilcoole Primary School, Co. Wicklow

**2nd place:** Henry O'Connor, Knockainey National School, Co. Limerick

**3rd place:** Evan Hilliard, St. Mary's National School, Knockbridge, Co. Louth

## 3rd & 4th CLASS

**1st place:** Willow McBride, Cloughjordan No 1 National School, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary

**2nd place:** Elsie Bourke, Ballinahinch National School, Ballinahinch, Co. Tipperary

**3rd place:** Martha Homan, Bennekerry National School, Bennekerry, Co. Carlow

## 5th & 6th CLASS

**1st place:** Zoe Doran, Mary Queen of Ireland GNS, Caherdavin, Limerick

**2nd place:** Conn Sheahan, St. Colmans NS, Clara, Co. Kilkenny

**3rd place:** Jessica Doran, St Margaret's NS, Co. Dublin

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

**1st Place:** Leah McCormack, Coláiste Íosagáin, Portarlinton, Co. Offaly

**2nd place:** Charlotte Foley, Sandford Park School, Ranelagh, Co. Dublin

**3rd place:** Grace Guinan, Sandford Park School, Ranelagh, Co. Dublin



# 1st & 2nd Class Category

## 1st Place Winner

### Message From the Waves

Once upon a time under the sparkling blue sea there lived a small octopus named Octy. He was bright red and loved waving his eight arms when he was excited. Octy lived near the shore where the waves whoshed in and out. His best friends were a funny dolphin named Dolphy and a grumpy crab named Mr.Pinch.

One day Octy was zooming around and bumped into something he thought was a jellyfish - but it wasn't! It was a plastic bag. And that wasn't the only thing that was polluting his home. He saw plastic bottles, crisp packets and even a nappy!

"This is not good" said Octy. "Our home is being destroyed, how will we survive?" Dolphy agreed "I know, it's terrible. The waves told me they are tired of carrying all this rubbish". "We need to send the humans a message and tell them to stop littering and wrecking our home". "How can we do that" said Mr. Pinch, "We don't have thumbs!"

"We don't need thumbs, we have teamwork!" exclaimed Octy in a heroic voice.

And they got to work. The fish swam in a big arrow pointing towards the beach. The seaweed tangled the terrible rubbish into a big pile near the shore. Octy used his eight arms to arrange shells into a message - PLEASE SAVE OUR HOME!

The next morning some children came to the beach and saw the shell message. "Did the ocean right this?" they wondered. "We better start cleaning it all up". They walked up and down the polluted beach, picking up plastic bottles, wrappers and lots of other trash that shouldn't be there. Their parents even came to help.

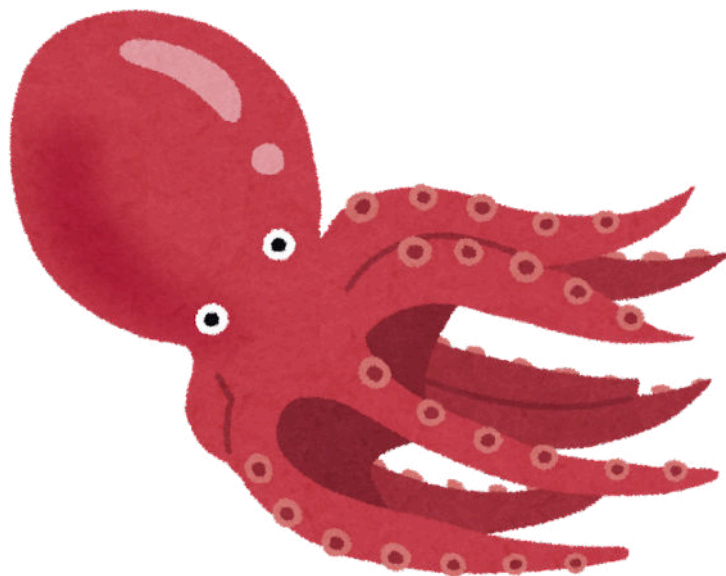


Under the water, Octy and his friends watched happily. "It's working" they cried. Octy waved all eight of his arms excitedly "the humans are helping to protect our home, they must really care about us".

From that day on, whenever the beach got messy Octy and his friends would write another shell message - because the ocean needs to be protected, or else our eight-legged friend wouldn't have a home.

P.S. Octy didn't know it, but his messages were helping to make the Great Pacific garbage Patch a little bit smaller!

**By Theo Kennedy**  
**Kilcoole Primary School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 1st & 2nd Class Category

## 2nd Place Winner

### From Me, The Sea

When you have an ice cream and put the stick in the sea,  
you never really know where it might be.  
The fish and the sharks have bellies of plastic,  
That you all throw away when you're feeling fantastic.  
Bottle caps and fishing nets end up being dinner,  
for the seals and the crabs think they've found a winner.  
All the ships and all the trawlers come out to me,  
for the dolphins and whales and the great company.  
When the waves splash your feet and you giggle with glee,  
You don't really think about what upsets me.  
I may not be happy all of the time,  
But I might forgive you, if you just start to try.

**By Henry O'Connor**  
**Knockainey National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 1st & 2nd Class Category

## 3rd Place Winner

### A Message from the Waves

Today Evan the SeaKeeper was cleaning the beach, when he noticed some sugar kelp on the sand. The sugar kelp spelled out a message, it said "We need your help".

Then something magical happened, Evan heard a whisper from the waves. The sea whispered "save the Dolphin Prince".

Suddenly a huge whale swam up to Evan and said "Get on, I'll take you to the Prince!" Evan climbed onto the whale tail up onto the whale's back. The whale swam out to a small cave where the Dolphin Prince was trapped. It was stuck in the cave behind a wall of rubbish and all the water was nearly gone.

Evan jumped into the water and started to move the rubbish out of the way.

Evan broke through the rubbish and set the Dolphin Prince free. When Evan got back to the beach he told all his Seakeeper friends the problems with the rubbish in the sea.

By Evan Hilliard  
St. Mary's National School



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 3rd & 4th Class Category

## 1st Place Winner

### Beneath the Waves

The sound of the waves makes me want to stop and listen,  
Just watch and see how it gladly glistens.  
It starts off as a chaotic powerful thing,  
Then it breaks into a million pieces and comes rushing back in.  
I watch it do this over and over again...  
towering, tumbling, breaking once-more,  
I get up off my chair and go through the back door.  
I grab goggles, a swim-suit and a big fluffy towel,  
As I make my way to the shore I hear the wind howl.  
I put one foot in the water and screech with fright,  
After that I swim with glee through the crisp ocean,  
I close my eyes and let myself be held in its motion.  
Beneath the waves dolphins chatter,  
Whales sing and fish scatter.  
As sharks arise from the darkening blues,  
Explorers take pictures like nobody knew.  
What treasures lie beneath the waves,  
Seaweed, plants, colours and caves.  
It's amazing down there,  
Where there's no fresh air,  
Down "Beneath the waves".

**By Willow McBride**  
**Cloughjordan No 1 National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 3rd & 4th Class Category

## 2nd Place Winner

### Ocean Waves

Ocean waves go up and down, side to side and all around.  
Crashing and splashing onto the sand, making cold wrinkles  
appear on my hands.

Bottles and cans on a beach make bad appearances to claws  
or beaks.

So try to hear what the ocean can speak and keep the  
environment nice and neat.

Rubbish and nets under the sea make dangerous traps for sea  
creatures far and near.

So try to keep your marine wildlife nice and neat.  
Sea creatures living on land or sea, big or small all belong  
here.

So try and keep your environment nice and clean,  
To make the world a better place to be.

**By Elsie Bourke**  
**Ballinahinch National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 3rd & 4th Class Category

## 3rd Place Winner

### The Message in my Scales

When the wind blew wild, and the tide came in,  
a fish swam up with plastic on its fin.  
He shook and he shook and he shook  
But he could not get it off,  
He also had a terrible cough,  
The oil spill was much too much, His gills were very sore to touch.  
Those people don't really care  
said the fish who way the mayor  
of a small town at the bottom of the sea  
that was destroyed and it was a big fee.  
The people on top of the ocean  
were rushing around causing a big commotion  
not seeing the damage they were causing  
Our big town had started pausing  
We cant go to work because we have to stay behind  
Cant they see we have to mind  
Our families day and night  
I often hear my children cry  
"Oh mama! papa! are we going to die?!"  
Just then a man came walking by  
So the fish decided he was going to try  
"Hey! Hey you!" shrieked the mayor  
"Yeah! You there!"  
"Is that a fish talking to me?"  
said the man whose name was Larry Mc Ní.  
I need to give you this information,  
are you taking down this notification?  
You and your people are littering a lot,  
so bad that our world has started to rot.



# 3rd & 4th Class Category

## 3rd Place Winner

### The Message in my Scales

"Oh I'm sorry" said Larry Mc Ní  
I'd really really happily  
Spread the word  
I'll tell my friends  
Hopefully then your rot will end.  
And please recycle too  
But that's not enough  
Also participatre in beach clean ups  
Ok and I will try hard  
I'll go long and far  
spreading this story of you and your town.  
So Larry Mc Ní  
started cleaning a beach  
and at the end of the day he made a small speech  
To the fish who thought good when the times were bad  
and to the times that were very sad  
He pulled through and decided to try  
So just a little bit  
Can make a big change!!!

**By Martha Homan**  
**Bennekerry National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 5th & 6th Class Category

## 1st Place Winner

### A Message From the Waves

The day started like any other day. Monday, ugh homework! Double Master Your Math's homework because I talked out in class. Math is the worst, but at least once it's done, I get to relax and listen to my music. There is nothing I enjoy more than relaxing on my bed, with my windows wide open so I can hear the ocean crash against the rocks. All while Olivia Rodrigo sings her heart out about the boy who cheated (I know, crazy right!) in the background.

As I laid my head against my pillow, pressed play on my Alexa, something wasn't right. Instead of hearing Olivia's voice scream about how she "wants to get him back", I heard something different. A girl, whispering. "Help please". I immediately called mum up, no answer. "Dad", I shouted, dead silence. I knew they wouldn't answer when my music was blaring. I thought maybe I should just call 999 but I knew I had to check in case it was just another prank my brother was playing. Suddenly, I heard it again, even louder this time. This wasn't a prank. This was real; as real as it could ever be. At this point I was shaking in fear, terrified. What could come next, I wondered.

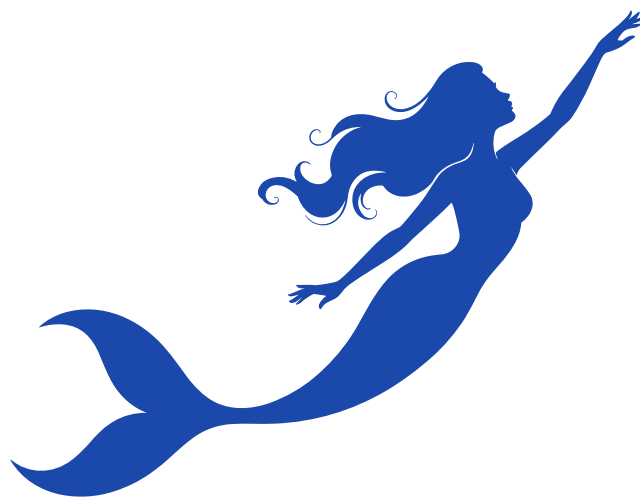
I tried playing a different song. This time I heard something else, two girls still whispering in that voice that made me shiver. "Please, our home is being destroyed by all this plastic. These old plastic bags, the dolphins swallow them and die. The turtles think bottle caps are food and are poisoned. We need your help; we cannot do this alone."



I knew I had to do something and fast. But what could I do? I was only a young girl. How could I save the ocean? Then it occurred to me. I needed help. I used mum's printer and designed flyers with the slogan BE THE WAVE THAT CLEANS THE SEA. I spent all my free time that week handing out flyers trying to get everyone in town to help. Many hands make light work and all that. I spent all that weekend gathering rubbish on the beach, as much as I could find. My friends in 5th class in Mary Queen of Ireland all came to help. Together, we collected over 50 bags of rubbish, and the good news was that most could be recycled! We even raised 110 euro for the school through the Re-turn scheme, recycling the bottles and cans that we found.

By Sunday night I was completely exhausted. By the time I got home, every muscle ached and all I could do was drag myself up the stairs. I plonked on my bed, could barely raise the energy to say "Alexa - play Zoe's playlist". Just when Taylor was about to tell me all about the fate of Ophelia, a voice came through singing melody... "We can not thank you enough." Mermaids really do have the most amazing voices.

**By Zoe Doran  
Mary Queen of Ireland  
Girls National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 5th & 6th Class Category

## 2nd Place Winner

### Timothy the Turtle

One sunny Saturday, two summers ago, me and my family went to a nice, small, quiet beach. We played by the water, ate a delicious lunch and then we went exploring! While I was gazing into rockpools I heard a small voice.

"Hullo! Does you wanna come see my friend?"

I looked around to try and locate the source of the sound. Then I spotted it, a bright orange crab. Suddenly, a fully black dolphin emerged from the water!

"Shhhh! You're not supposed to talk to those weird humans. They don't know that we speak English!" whispered the black dolphin.

"Well he knows now" he snapped back. "So I Corry the Crab and that grumpy fish over there be David the Dolphin. Soooo what be your name?" asked Corry enthusiastically.

I wondered whether I should tell him my name, I had always been told to keep my identity a secret from strangers. But then again, I figured it would be different with talking marine animals.

"Uh...I, uh...I'm Conn," I replied eventually.

"Conn? Conn the what?" Corry asked looking puzzled.

"Just Conn I guess."

"Alright Justconn, wanna come see my friend? He kinda needs help."

Without even waiting for a reply, David leaped out of the water and through my legs. I grabbed onto his fin and held my breath as he splashed back into the water.

We passed a school of fish, a hammerhead shark and finally a coral reef. We then entered a wide ark cave. Amazingly, I found that I could breath. As my eyes adjusted I spotted a still looking turtle lying at the back of the cave.

"That's Timothy the Turtle," David muttered glumly. "He's 200 years old.

Yesterday he accidentally ate plastic for breakfast and then..." Davids voice began to shake. "Then he got so sick. Even Olivia the Otter doesn't know what to do. And she's the nurse! Please can you help him, please."



"Well I suppose I could get a vet," I suggested quietly.

"No, nope, no way, negative, never in like a billion years are we getting more o'these good for nothin humans!" said Corry matter of factly. "I'm already regretting bringing Justconn 'ere."

I ignored him. I swam over to Timothy. Even though he should have been conserving his energy he started to grumble.

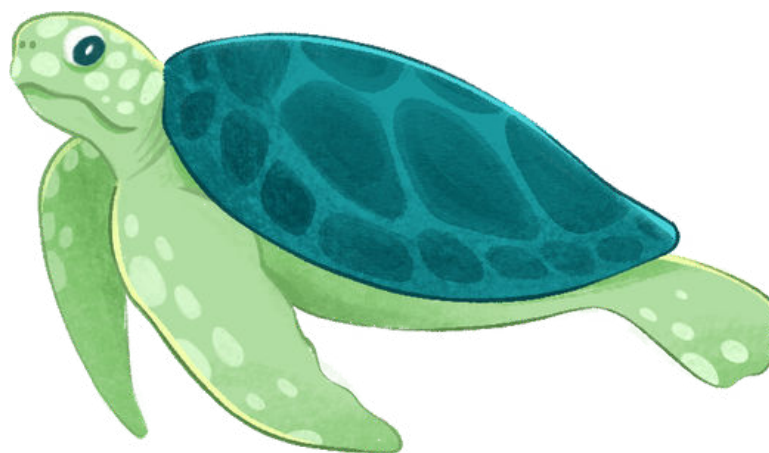
*"When i was a young guy  
I thought that I would die  
but then my grandpa showed me  
a very ancient prophecy  
that Justconn would clear the sea  
of the litter that would one day kill me  
so, bear in mind that stopping the pollution  
is indeed the only solution."*

Then he lay still. I knew he had died. Even though I didn't know him at all I was absolutely devastated. Then it dawned on me. This was happening everyday to marine animals all over the world!

When I got home, I got a tortoise and I named him Tim (after Timothy the turtle) and I made posters to help you be more friendly to the marine environment!

The End

**By Conn Sheahan  
St.Colmans National School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# 5th & 6th Class Category

## 3rd Place Winner

### A Message from the Waves

A message from the waves.  
It came from the deep.  
It washed up on the shore,  
Landing softly as we sleep.

I saw it glittering beneath the moonlight.  
It shone brightly like the stars of the night.  
As I ran quickly down towards the sea shore.  
My feet pounded upon the sandy floor.

Could it be an old lost treasure map?  
Maybe a great fortune will land in my lap?  
Or maybe it's a message from someone lost at sea.  
Hopefully pleading to 'please rescue me'.

I picked up the bottle, and its message within,  
The message was worrying, let the lesson begin,  
"To whoever finds this...", the message said.  
As lots of thoughts ran through my head.

Excitedly, I decided to read on.  
Even though "Jessica come back" called my mom.  
But... I knew I could not.  
As I started to read I was transfixed to the spot.  
"Please help save the oceans", the message it said.  
It was a worrying plot, the more that I read...,  
The plastic and the rubbish hurled into the sea.  
Thrown away by you and me.





# Secondary School Category

## 1st Place Winner

### A message from the waves

I am the whisper on the silver sand,  
The restless tide that strokes the land,  
The rolling blue both wild and brave,  
I am the voice within each wave.

I've sung to sailors through the night,  
Beneath the moon's soft lantern light,  
I've cradled stars upon my crest  
And held the sun against my chest.

For centuries I've danced with shore,  
Returned again, forevermore,  
A steady breath, a timeless tune,  
A mirrored sky, a glassy moon.

Within my depths bright forests grow,  
Where coral gardens gently glow,  
And silver fish like arrows gleam  
Through shifting shafts of emerald beam.

The turtles glide on ancient trails,  
The dolphins trace the windy gales,  
The seahorses in silence sway  
Where tangled strands of seaweed play.

The whales compose their haunting song,  
A melody both deep and long,  
That echoes through my sapphire halls  
And hums against my rocky walls.

But listen close between each cheer,  
For there's a truth you need to hear,  
Beneath my laughter, bright and wide,  
A quieter sorrow tries to hide.



For drifting where the plankton gleam,  
There floats a darker, stranger stream,  
Of plastic shards and bottles thrown  
Like seeds of carelessness once sown.

The nets that wander, torn and lost,  
Are silent traps at dreadful cost,  
They snare the fins that once cut free  
And steal the breath of life from me.

My coral cities fade to white,  
As warming waters dim their light,  
Their colors pale, their structures frail,  
Like fragile towers doomed to fail.

The oil that stains my dancing skin  
Leaves choking shadows deep within,  
And creatures small and creatures grand  
Grow sick from what you cast by hand.

I do not wish to sound severe,  
For still I hold this planet dear,  
I kiss the shore with hopeful grace  
And cool the winds in warm embrace.

Each child who walks along my side  
And watches patiently the tide,  
Who lifts a shell with gentle care  
And breathes my salty, healing air,

Holds in their heart a shining key  
To guard the blue that shelters me,  
To choose the path that mends, restores,  
And keeps my wild, bright-open doors.

Refuse the straw, the bag, the waste,  
Let wiser habits now be placed,  
Let rivers run both clean and clear  
So I may sing without a tear.



Plant seeds of thought, let knowledge grow,  
Let every tide of change now flow,  
For every action, small though it seems,  
Can stir a thousand hopeful dreams.

I am the waves upon the shore,  
But I am also something more,  
A living world of scale and fin,  
Of fragile reef and shining skin.

Though I am vast and deep and wide,  
I cannot heal from hurt and hide,  
I need your hands, your voice, your care,  
To keep my waters bright and fair.

So hear my message, soft yet brave,  
It rises with each curling wave:  
Protect the life beneath my foam,  
For I, dear child, am your blue home.

And if you stand and choose what's right,  
I'll shimmer still in morning light,  
Both sad for what has come to be  
Yet glad for those who fight for me.

**By Leah McCormack**  
**Scoil Coláiste Íosagáin**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# Secondary School Category

## 2nd Place Winner

### Blue

I skipped class on Wednesday  
It was far too glorious a day.  
I slipped through the garden gate,  
Out into the freedom of fate.

Escaped onto the bay-side,  
I sat on fresh cut grass  
Watching the waves swish and crash as they pass.  
Just beyond the glistening lagoon,  
Little silver scales swayed as they swam in their great fortune.

I walked down the shore, barefoot in the sand,  
The ocean glides it's seaweed hair over my hand.  
I took a dive, making the gods jealous of me  
As they watch, I swam in the great blue sea.

It was beautiful, where the fish would thrive.  
The visible sunbeams and the coloured reef.  
I'd stay down forever if I could only survive.  
Coming up for my breath, my lungs expanded with relief.

Maybe when I've passed this life,  
I'll come back as something new.  
My eyes glossy and my skin scaled blue.

I'll sleep in some coral or seaweed or caves near the bay.  
I'll make friends with the jellies, a flounder and a stingray.  
I'll jump with dolphins, I'll clean with the shrimp and banter with a crab  
or chill with a whale.



I'll glimmer in the sun and shine with the moon.  
I'll be on my own but never alone  
Out in the deep blue.

But for now, I'll sit here solomently  
Breathing sighs of woe  
And envy the marine life  
down below.

**By Charlotte Foley  
Sandford Park School**



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland



# Secondary School Category

## 3rd Place Winner

### The Shell Collectors

Sarah has lived beside the sea ever since she was little and today she was moving because of a new job opportunity her mom had in the city. Sarah knew this wasn't the only reason though, her parents have always loved living by the seashore and it was no coincidence that they were moving this year. She looked at what once was her bedroom, but now just an empty room that smelt of fresh paint. Before leaving she stopped in her tracks and glanced an empty window still that used to hold a string of sea shells she had collected with her nana.

As if there was a tide claiming her, she was tossed into a sea of memories. Waves of nostalgia overtook her as she drowned the rest of the world out and the past flooded inside her mind.

Sarah was shovelling sand with her bare hands while an elderly lady laughed at her antics. It was easy to tell they were grandmother and granddaughter from the way she would speak gently to the young child as she showed her yet again another shell she had found. Though it was much the same as the last with it's plain cream exterior and lined dents. Her nana would treasure this gift like a pearl itself. When Sarah was younger her nana would help collect the shells the pair would have found on the beach.

When Sarah's nana gained a few more wrinkles and her hair turned white, she'd decided her knees and back couldn't handle the strain of bending anymore. She still used her keen eyes to find shells all the while teaching Sarah how to better find them herself. It wasn't long till Sarah could find shells even faster than her nana, however that could be partially because of her nana's once perfect vision now dwindling. She claimed she had the ability to see the world as if under water. Sarah thought this was a very cool power, her nana agreed.



However on a cloudy day, when she sat next to her granddaughter on the deserted beach, she had confessed she missed being able to see Sarah's face clearly as she once had. Sarah had passed her a beautiful shell she found, it was clean and white with a purple inner lining. Her nana smiled at the pretty colour and felt the hard shell between her fingers, which felt much the same as it always had.

Her nana had passed away last spring, she hadn't been able to go to beach with Sarah for a long time. Still Sarah wished she could have taken her nana on just one more trip and to have appreciated it a little more. She knew it was time to leave as her dad started calling her from the car. She gazed at the faded shells she'd found on her last trip to the beach. Then beside the shore, she left them there. For her nana to find.

**By Grace Guinan  
Sandford Park School**



Congratulations to all  
the winners and well  
done to everyone who  
entered this year's  
competition!

- Green-Schools Marine Team



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland





**Green-Schools**

 An Taisce

Green-Schools Ireland,  
An Taisce,  
5 Foster Place,  
Temple Bar,  
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 4002222  
Email: [info@greenschoolsireland.org](mailto:info@greenschoolsireland.org)  
[www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org)



**Rialtas  
na hÉireann**  
Government  
of Ireland



Green-Schools supports the  
Sustainable Development Goals