



Winning, Highly Commended &
Commended
Entries

5-7 Age Category

The 20th Elmbridge Literary Competition 2025

THE RIVER

Whether winding through the great cities of the world, or meandering across quiet country landscapes, Rivers have fascinated writers and poets.

Rivers have always flowed through literature, whether as tributaries representing the journey through life, or as passage to the Underworld. They have served as home to Mr Toad, the lair of goat-eating trolls and have been there to mess about on, as Huckleberry Finn or the three men in Jerome K Jerome's classic story can attest. Today they are at the heart of the environmental debate. RC Sherriff, the author of 'Journey's End', spent many hours on the river. A memorial to his passion for rowing, The Rowing Eight, still stands on the banks of The Thames at Molesey.

To commemorate the Anniversary of the publication of 'Three Men In A Boat', The 20th Elmbridge Literary Competition was looking for short stories and poems on the theme of 'The River'.

Previous Competition Themes:

2005:	Cook Up A Story
2006:	On My Way
2007:	A Life In Colour
2008:	Once Upon A Time
2009:	A Symphony of Life
2010:	The Elmbridge 100
2011:	Breaking The Barrier
2012:	A Dickens of A Christmas
2013:	One Act Radio Play
2014:	Dear Diary
2015:	Flights of Fantasy
2016:	Love
2017:	Luck
2018:	A Shiver Down The Spine/Things That Go Bump In The Night
2019/20:	New World
2021:	Music
2022:	Enigma
2023:	The Road
2024:	Fame

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Short Story Category

1st Place Equal Story: Pooh Sticks On The River Mole

Belle Mitchell-Ford

Once upon a time, in a lovely part of Elmbridge called Cobham, there were some children who loved to play by the River Mole. It was the best place ever! The water made you want to jump in on a warm summer's day, but it could also be a bit cold so we just dipped our toes in sometimes. The riverbanks were covered in soft, green grass, and there were big, old trees with thick roots that looked like they had been there for a long time.

One sunny half-term afternoon, my friends and I decided to play Pooh Sticks. If you don't know what Pooh Sticks is, it's a game where you drop sticks off one side of a bridge and then run to the other side to see whose stick comes out first. It's really fun and like a race, but with sticks!

I met Rex, Emily, Lucy and Will at the old wooden bridge that crossed the River Mole at Painshill Park. We each picked out our sticks from the ground. Rex found a really straight one, Lucy picked one with a funny bend in it, Will chose a thick, heavy one, and Emily and I shared a stick that was just the right size.

"Ready, set, go!" I shouted, and we all dropped our sticks into the water at the same time. Then we ran to the other side of the bridge as fast as we could. The river was flowing slowly, and we could see our sticks bobbing up and down in the water. It was so exciting!

"Look, mine's in the lead!" Lucy yelled, jumping up and down. Her stick was winning but then it got caught on a little rock, and Will's thick stick floated past it. We all cheered and laughed. The river made a soft, bubbling sound as it flowed, and the sunlight made the water sparkle like thousands of diamonds.

Just when we thought Will's stick was going to win, a sudden gust of wind blew, and the stick Emily and I chose zoomed ahead! "Go, go, go!" we shouted, waving our arms. Our stick dodged all the rocks and spun around in the water like it was dancing. It was the best feeling ever when our stick crossed the finish line first!!

We played Pooh Sticks for hours, and each time, a different stick would win. Sometimes the river would surprise us by making a stick go really fast, and other times

it would slow down and make us wait. But it was always fun, and we never got tired of it.

As the sun began to set, we sat and talked about our favourite sticks and laughed about the funny things that happened during our day by the river.

The River Mole was a special place for my friends, and playing Pooh Sticks there was our favourite thing to do. It was the perfect day, and we couldn't wait to come back and play again.

THE END

1st Place Equal Story: The Goat In A Boat

Ada Taylor

There was a goat in a boat. He saw some fluffy cats having a pool party. He asked if they wanted to join him on the boat and they said "yes please ". They brought some pool floats with them!

Then he found some turtles. He asked them the same question, and guess what? They said "yes"! All the turtles did a graceful dance in the water and they brought a little snack with them, which they shared with the cats.

The cats and the turtles asked "where are we going?" The goat said "somewhere" and he started singing Somewhere over the Rainbow. He wasn't any help.

Then they met some geese that were eating some bread that the people had given them. The goat said " do you want to come on my boat?" The geese said "yes please, this bread has made my tummy hurt anyway". So off they went.

There were some crocodiles swimming around some rocks. The goat asked them if they wanted to join him they said yes because they were only hiding around the rocks so the people with guns couldn't get them

The boat was getting a bit full but the goat didn't mind. The other animals did though, the cats were suspicious of the crocodiles, and the crocodiles were sad that there were no more snacks. The animals kept asking the goat "when are we stopping?" and "where are we going?" and again and again the goat says "somewhere". Not much help.

A few minutes later the goat got to his destination. "Good" said all the animals. They regretted their "good" right after they said it because guess where it was?

Right in the middle of the river!

And the goat was nowhere to be found.

2nd Place Story: All About The Ducks

Georgia Hall

One day there was a river close to my house. It was called the River Freshney. I went there on a walk with my dog, Nala, my mum, my dad and my brother, Theo.

As we walked along the path, we heard some quacking, and it wasn't happy quacking. It was because the river was full of RUBBISH! People who didn't care about the animals and the wildlife had thrown empty packets, bottles, and cans of pop in there. I was disappointed, very mad and a little sad. I thought I should make a sign saying, 'NO RUBBISH HERE!'

We cleared lots of the rubbish into bags and put it all in the bin.

In my dad's garage he had some wood. I used it to put the card sign to it. I used a red permanent marker to write on the card 'NO RUBBISH HERE!' It looked fabulous!

On our next walk we carried the sign and put it close to the river and the path where people walked. Then we continued our dog walk feeling proud.

Over the next few weeks, we noticed the rubbish was no longer around. All the ducks began to happy quack.

Me and Theo did the happy clap all the way home!

The End

3rd Place Story: The Day Rose Crossed the River

Atarah Ogunmola

Rose and Annie were sitting near the river. They dreamt of crossing the river one day. They have never crossed the river before, because their mums and dads said they shouldn't. They knew they would get lost.

One day, Annie went to Canada with her parents to see the northern lights. Poor Rose was lonely. She sat by the river, looking sadly at the empty boat nearby. She thought of crossing the river all by herself.

A voice in her head quietly whispered, "Don't cross the river, it's too dangerous."

"I will be super careful," said Rose who had no idea what was going to happen next.

Rose pushed the boat into the river, then she carefully climbed into the boat and started paddling. Soon after she set off, she started thinking about how much she missed Annie. She suddenly remembered that she was supposed to be paddling, but it was too late. The boat had already reached the sea. She was stuck in the boat, far from land.

Rose's mother came to the river bank to look for Rose. It was lunch time and Rose wasn't home. "ROSE, WHERE ARE YOU?" She shouted when she could not find Rose anywhere. "I-I-I think Rose got lost again," mum told the coast guards when she called them. They promised to find Rose. Her mother was worried; she thought she would never see Rose again.

The coast guards jumped into their own boats to look for Rose. When they found Rose, Rose was paddling in circles, trying to get back home. She was happy that she had been found. She wished she never left. The coast guard took her home. Her mother was waiting for her. She gave Rose a big hug and said, 'don't do that again, I was so worried.'

When Annie returned from Canada weeks after, Rose told her about her adventure on the seas. Rose said, "I am never going to go into a boat without an adult again."

They both giggled.

Highly Commended: The Magical River

Joni Eyre

Once, there was a girl called Maddy, and she was 23 years old. Maddy was friendly, loving and enjoyed going on adventures. Maddy loved to walk by rivers, and one day she saw a huge castle under a river. She felt very curious about this, and wanted to go and explore.

So she put on her swimming costume and goggles, then dived into the river (the river was smelly). She was amazed because the castle was big and shiny. Maddy saw LOADS of mermaids. The mermaids were so beautiful, Maddy couldn't even blink! The mermaids had glittery, blue scales and bright pink eyes.

Then Maddy said "hi", and every single mermaid went silent and stared at her. In response, the mermaids said "hi" and Maddy asked "do you want to play?" and then the mermaids shouted "yes!" So they played tag. Maddy felt very happy as she got to play with mermaids, and her parents always said that mermaids weren't real and that they were only true in stories.

3 weeks later...

Something wasn't right. Maddy woke up and asked herself 'why does everyone make me do their chores?' Then Maddy realised that they were turning her into a slave. She felt sad because she thought the mermaids were her true friends. So she swam as fast as she could up to the surface. There, Maddy was safe.

The End

Commended: Jakob and The Time Machine

Jakob Bojarzyn

Once upon a time there was a happy boy who lived in a treehouse. His name was Jakub. He always dreamed about living by the river so that he could catch fish and swim in the river. He loved inventing things and he was writing books. One day he went back in time because he had a time machine and he really wanted to see dinosaurs. And he saw an ancient river with Diplodocus drinking water from the river. Then he got back in his time machine because he wanted to meet some explorers. He went to another ancient river and he met an explorer Ibn Batutta with a camel. His camel was also drinking water from the river. Jakub said "hello" to Ibn Batutta and he said "hello" back in Moroccan. After that Jakub decided to use his time machine to travel to the future. The river from the future had green water and the sun on the sky was dark orange. This time Jakub met a giant gold crab who said nothing because he couldn't speak. Jakub felt tired after all the time travel and decided to visit one last place – the longest river in the world. It was the Nile River. There were pyramids next to River Nile and its water was deep and dark. Jakub then got back in his time machine and travelled back to his treehouse. He felt happy and joyful. The end.

Commended: Mystery Rainbow River

Chimdiuto Anagbado

Izzy is a lovely cheerful 7 years old who happens to have a big secret. Everyone in her new school and neighbourhood wondered what the big secret was? Not even her best friend Sloane knows. She talked about it so much and emphasised how beautiful it was, which made everyone so eager to know the big secret.

Izzy won this shiny box as a special prize in a local fun fair event. The box has a unique code – 820300, which she wrote at the back of the table mirror in her room.

One Saturday afternoon, Sloane came over to Izzy's house to discuss their volcano science fair project. But before they got started, she went up to Izzy's room to remove her jumper and freshen up. While she was using the mirror, it slipped off her hand and fell on the fluffy carpet just around the dressing table. Luckily, the mirror didn't break. As she picked it up, she saw the code. She wondered what could this number mean. It reads 'My Secret Code'. Sloane thought this might be the secret that Izzy has been talking about. To quench her curiosity, she looked around the room and found a shiny box with a combination lock in her drawer. Yes! I found it!!! Sloane exclaimed. She opened the box and found a pair of googles. She wore them and looked in the box mirror. Immediately, she was transported to a magical garden with a rainbow river flowing in a fascinating circular motion full of colourful ornaments, flowers and small colourful fishes which gave the river its rainbow colour.

This is magical! and beautiful! screamed Sloane.

Sloane was so occupied in her experience that she didn't hear Izzy calling her name and then, coming into the room.

Izzy was surprised that Sloane has found her magical secret and was furious. She tapped Sloane hard on her shoulder which made her jump and removed the googles immediately.

Why did you invade my privacy and go through my things without my permission she blurted! It's not what you think Izzy! replied Sloane.

Sloane explained to Izzy how it all happened and told her what a beautiful magical experience it was.

You shouldn't be hiding this you know! Said Sloane. Let's show it to everyone! We could even take it to school.

Hmmm!!! Izzy let out a loud sound under her breath. Ok! I think we could, after all its not a secret anymore.

So, Izzy and Sloane named the magical box “The Mystery Rainbow River”.

The next school day, they were both excited for their big reveal. They told their science teacher about it; and how they would like to use it as a reward for anyone who answers correctly, questions about their local river, its history and significance to the community. Many students loved the experience and were eager to answer questions. The year 3 science class became famous in the entire school for its beautiful Mystery Rainbow River.

Poetry Category

1st Place Poem: Amazon Adventure

Jake Baker

I am in a little boat,
On the Amazon River I float.
What can I see?
Huge towering trees,
Looming over my head.
I see parrots that are red,
I hear squawks and shrieks,
From their razor-sharp beaks.
The piranhas look scarily at me,
They want to eat me for their tea.

I am in a little boat,
On the Amazon river I float,
The pink river dolphins swim happily,
The caimans creep snappily,
Looking like logs,
Hiding in the Amazon's wet bogs.

I am in a little boat,
On the Amazon river I float,
Towards the furious rapids...

2nd Place Poem: River of Knowledge
Aaradhya Agrawal

The river flows both night and day,
It never stops or fades away.
Through books and lessons, far and wide,
It carries wisdom like a guide.

It rushes fast, it drifts so slow,
But always helps our minds to grow.
With every word and thought we find,
It fills the heart, it shapes the mind.

So dip your hands, take what you need,
The river's full of thoughts to read!
It never ends, it runs so free,
A stream of learning—come and see.

3rd Place Poem: The River Walk

Cleo Brown

In the fairy tales I read, the rivers are always blue.
But when I walk by *our* river, I don't know what to do,
It's gone all brown and yucky and smells a little bad,
I hope the ducks and fishes aren't feeling too sad.

When I grow up, I will make sure the rivers stay nice and clean,
Dumping rubbish and sewage is really very mean.
Don't be mean to our planet please, I don't want you to hurt it,
It has to last a really long time... forever. And that's worth it.

Highly Commended: The River
Ava Mahadeo

Rivers are beautiful, relaxing and nice.

Rivers have lots of life, like frogs, fish and mice.

I like rivers when they are clear and green.

I think we all need to do our best to keep them clean.

Vipers can be found near rivers.

Very cold rivers can make you shivers.

Every river leads to the seaside with the tide.

Eagles swoop down to get fish by the river side.

Rivers flow wherever you go, up, down and all around.

Rain drops fall gently on the river and makes a lovely sound.

Highly Commended: You Never Stop Moving

Olivia Nieto Pestana

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you because the animals that live in you can survive:

fish, frogs and ducks.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you because plants can grow with your water.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you because people can drink your water.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you because we can play pooh sticks with you.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you as we have fun playing games with you.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you as we do sports with you: rowing and swimming.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you as we can deliver food throughout the world on boats.

Oh river, you never stop moving.

Thank you because you bring us fun, calm and peace.

Fun, throwing stones.

Calm, walking next to your beauty.

Peace, eating ice cream beside you.

Oh river, you never stop moving!

Highly Commended: Journey Down The River

Athena Helen Gordon

One day I was looking around
And I found a leaf upon the ground.
I put the leaf in a river
And it gave a cold little shiver.
It passed some children playing pooh sticks
And then it got stuck for a tiny bit.
A heron set it on its way
And it travelled on through night and day.
Sometimes fast and sometimes slow
Through wind and rain and even snow.
It passed a train chuffing steam
Then reached the sea and shouted – ITS MY DREAM!

Commended: Flowing River
Laurie Mitchell

Swishing and swirling, the river goes,
Making noises as it flows.
So peacefully, you can't hear a sound
So quietly it calms people down.

Ducks and swans eating bread,
People being careful not to throw it on their head.
Mind your fingers as they bite,
A black moorhen pecked my brother, but he was alright!

Commended: My Little Doggy
Merida Frontado

Sitting by the river makes me feel calm,
Thinking of my doggy curled up in my arms.
Closing his eyes while I stroked his forehead,
When I took him home and put him to bed.

I saw the sun start to go down,
And I felt myself begin to frown.
While wiping away my tears,
Thinking of the memories over the years.

As the years go by, I often return to the river.
Cookie, you will be in my heart forever.

The R C Sherriff Trust is an independent charitable trust, established through the terms of the Will of playwright, R C Sherriff. It has been promoting and developing the arts in the Borough of Elmbridge, for 30 years. Further details about the Trust can be found at www.rcsherrifftrust.org.uk

Elmbridge Borough Council's Arts Development seeks to increase opportunities for people to engage in the arts, culture and heritage of our Borough, either individually or through partnerships, such as those with the R.C. Sherriff Trust that make Elmbridge Primary Schools Festival possible. With the aim of engaging residents, Elmbridge Borough Council's Art Development supports arts organisations and presents arts-based activities that improve the physical and mental health of people who live and work in Elmbridge.

