

# Teenage writer racks up awards

By DANIEL SILVERTON

**E**mma Shi's writing can bring tears to the eyes of those reading her multi award-winning work.

The year 13 Pakuranga College pupil won the National Schools Poetry Award presented by Victoria University for her work, *inadequately blue*.

The 16-year-old was inspired to write the poem by the sight of the sun early one morning.

"I was sleepy, but the sky was so pretty and it was slowly getting brighter," says Emma.

"The situation struck me with a sense of inadequacy about being human.

"*Inadequately blue* is about how small we are, with all our limits, along with the things we could, and wish we could do – if only we were, perhaps, as great as the sky."

Emma wasn't aware of the competition when she composed the poem.

"I write almost every day. Poems I like, I try to write like that. I have more of a rambling style."

The competition judge, poet and Victoria University lecturer Anna Jackson, says Emma's is a very assured poem, from its arresting opening image, through its three poised and shapely stanzas.

"This is a poem about an origami feeling, with the image of the origami cranes at once suggesting the care, the attention, the patience it takes to 'fold and fold and fold', and at the same time the lack of pretension, the artlessness, the simplicity of writing all in the lower case about nothing more than a feeling."

Emma is proud of the feedback, saying: "It felt really good because it's the one thing I'm most passionate about.

"To have someone say I'm good is really amazing."

Emma and her teacher, Pakuranga



**WORDSMITH:** Pakuranga College pupil and prize-winning writer Emma Shi, right, with the school's head of English, Vanessa Scott.

Times photo Daniel Silvertton

College head of English Vanessa Scott, had to wait a week before they could spread the word of Emma's achievement.

"It killed me," says Mrs Scott. "I'm very aware of Emma's talents, but I have to say, the first time I read *inadequately blue* I cried, and I cried the next 10 times I read it.

"Emma's writing has the ability to touch your emotions and has as much sophistication and resonance as any professional writer I have read."

The winner's prizes include \$500 and a trip to Wellington for a poetry

master class at Victoria's International Institute of Modern Letters.

In June, Emma also won the senior poetry section of the Write Off Line competition organised by Tauranga Writers, for her poem, *a little bit empty*.

Judge Marcel Currin says: "An amazing piece of work. Emma's poem makes a fantastic impact on the audience with its steam-punk elements. It terrifies me how good she can write."

*A little bit empty* will appear in the Write Off Line anthology to be pub-

lished later this year.

Last year, Emma tried her hand at short story writing and won a contest for her piece, *Blue, Blue Eyes*.

The competition was run by American author Ripley Patton and Emma's story will feature in Mrs Patton's next book, *Ghost Hunt*.

"*Blue, Blue Eyes* was poetic and haunting with a beautiful use of literary techniques that tied the whole story together," says Mrs Patton.

Emma hopes to continue her creative writing as a career, after studying in Auckland or Wellington.

## inadequately blue

by EMMA SHI

*the sky folds open every morning  
like origami*

*and i fold out with it, like butterflies,  
like pretty birds, lifting away,*

*only to be caught in the creases of  
the ocean.*

*they say that if you make one  
thousand*

*paper cranes, you get a wish.*

*if my fingers did not ache, i would  
fold and fold and fold*

*until i got not one wish, but a mil-  
lion,*

*and i would scatter them across  
the sea*

*and kiss the feathers that wash up  
on the shore each year.*

*my lipstick stains are stuck on the  
softest things in the world*

*like clouds and the boy who didn't  
say goodbye.*

*he dipped his finger into sunsets  
and painted my eyes red, orange,  
fire,*

*and i would spread that burn out  
across the ocean*

*but my fingers shake*

*and nothing comes out of my  
mouth but air.*