

# DEDDINGTON WRITING COMPETITION 2009

## Junior Writing Competition

Junior Section (age 11 and under)

**Story. Theme: "The Secret" - Entries: 98**

**Winner**

### **The Secret Life of a Bee**

**By Hermione Cook**

of Cropredy

Whining and endless, the drone of hundreds of bees echoed through the sweltering and dimly lit hive. Its honey-combed walls bore many delicious globules of honey, the hard work and efforts of many generations of bees. A slight breeze blew into the swollen edifice, ruffling many wings. On an edge of an empty honey-comb, a large bee surveyed the crawling swarms below him with interest, watching them go about their daily business. They were telling their neighbours about the best nectar and the best flowers. They didn't speak, they showed the other bees where to go, wagging and circling, their complicated movements saying exactly what the other bees needed to know.

The solo bee scanned the wiggling insects slowly catching odd phrases such as, "Down. left" and "Lots. Yellow flowers"

Selecting a promising looking, 'Big White. On. Shiny. Surface.', the solo bee launched himself into the air, dodging this way and that, up and down, as he flew through the incoming insects. He chanced across a small exit hole and zoomed through it, a cool waft of evening summer air running through his delicate, membraned wings as he did so.

It felt good to be out in the golden, evening sunlight that was warming him through and washing all his cares away. Below him an endless green forest of spikes stretched in every direction, thundering from side to side.

He could just about make out the bright splashes of colour that bordered the forest, a sure sign of the flowers that gave the delicious nectar.

Above him the sky was a beautiful deep blue and studded with scurrying clouds, turning golden as the sun set.

Turning his attention to his work now, the bee scanned the green ground for the 'shiny surface'. He flew on though, now passing over a wandering line of ants, carrying their precious, white load, now passing over a clump bright yellow flowers. He considered stopping but it didn't seem worth the effort.

A sickly sweet smell drifted over to him, it was like no flower he'd ever encountered before. Curiously he glanced around, trying to spot the strange flower, when he saw it. The shiny surface!

It was huge, as were most things to bees, and dotted with the (gigantic) deep green lily pads that the white and pink flowers nestled on. The bee manoeuvred himself downwards, before settling on a pale pink lily. He eased himself onto the stigma, carefully avoiding the dusty anthers.

The lily's centre was green, with darker brown spots running up the inside petals.

He stuck his long proboscis into the style, sucking up the delicious nectar.

When it had all gone, he rose from the lily, shaking off all the pollen that had stuck to him and casting the flower with a golden halo.

Along the lily pad there was a smaller more tightly furled up lily that didn't look worth the bother.

However there was a large pink lily nearby, which offered a surprising amount of nectar that was just perfect to fill him up. He sprang back into the air, and set course for the hive.

On the way back the bee kept his eyes open for any promising looking flowers he could tell the other bees about, but all the flower beds were too far away, and the wind was strengthening, and he wasn't sure if his delicate wings would cope. He flew as fast as he could on the way back, but it still seemed hours before he finally saw the hive in the distance. Relieved, he slowed down slightly.

Eventually he reached the hive, and he crawled into it, onto the seething mass of bees. He worked his way slowly over to the wall and he crammed his nectar into one of the empty honeycombs.

He then began to dance, telling the other bees about lilies yet to be plundered, nectar yet to be collected, the journeys yet to be travelled.

Outside, the wind whistled in the trees, waving branches and sending leaves plummeting to the ground as the sun fell to the ground in a fiery chariot of red and pink.

The competition judge, author Dennis Hamley, commented:

*'This is an extraordinarily ambitious story. The writer has attempted something very difficult and it has come off. It's very well organised, has excellent descriptions which aren't static but really work in helping the story along and has*

*some sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentence structure. The whole piece is a remarkable feat of imagination and augurs for the writer's future.'*

About the overall standard:

*'I've read some extremely good stories and the standard is very high. It's always hard to pick winners when the stories are so varied, so different. I've been struck by the powerful imaginations on show and the really good writing which many of the finalists managed. Every story here has its strengths and all the entrants can feel proud of their achievements because they are very high.'*

Dennis Hamley