

Year 7 & 8 Category Winner

# We Are Rivers

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The River Derwent - timtumili minanya - stretches out before me, a stunning shade of cobalt, rich and deep, as though the very sky has spilled into its depths. Sunlight glimmers on its rippling surface, scattering light into a thousand tiny dancing fragments. It is alive with a million stories: whispers from the land and sea, echoes of times and places long forgotten, mysteries and tales that will never be told.

Two years ago, in science, we learned about rivers. No two rivers are exactly alike, but they all have certain features in common and go through similar stages as they age.

A river begins at its source: perhaps a crystalline glacier, the melting snow of a mountain, or a placid lake. Its beginning is humble and unremarkable - tiny trickles of water merge into rills, weaving their way downhill. Fragile, yet brimming with potential.

In its upper course, the river rushes down steep slopes, churning and frothing. It surges forward, gathering momentum, rushing with youthful abandon into the world. Regardless of the rocks and waterfalls that burden its path, it tumbles on without hesitation, eager to make its mark. It is young and wild and full of energy.

Gradually, as rain and groundwater and the sprawling veins of tributaries join it, it swells, reaching its middle course. Here, its pace is no longer urgent and reckless; it has mellowed. And this is when it begins to leave its mark. It begins to meander, slowly eroding the bank around it. Its path is no longer defined by sharp rocks and steep descents. Instead, it begins to shape the world as much as the world has shaped it.

We are all rivers, winding through the landscape of time - a continuous flow of moments, choices, and experiences. Throughout our journey, the world around is always evolving, guiding us in directions we may not expect. We all navigate our own rapids, trip over rocks and tumble down waterfalls.

Throughout all of this, it is the journey that matters, not the destination. What matters are the people we meet, the relationships we build, and the obstacles we overcome. What matters are our experiences, our memories, our actions. What matters is the knowledge, the kindness, and the love that we give and gain. These are the forces that shape who we are. The things that make us unique and extraordinary. They are the tributaries that merge into a river, flowing together to give our lives depth and meaning, each contributing a different story.

In the end, we are all part of the ocean.

And really, what matters is what we leave behind. The river leaves its mark on the land - smoothing out rough stones, nourishing ecosystems, and filling the world with life. Even the slightest movement sends ripples outwards, and it is up to us whether these consequences are good or bad.

As the river nears the end of its journey, its movements grow sluggish and weak. It can no longer shift the sediment it has collected, which forms a delta at its mouth. Here, it deposits its history, which will in time form new worlds, nourishing the environment, giving back what it has taken.

The water spreads wide, and slow, and deep. Its current is pensive and serene, flowing with a quiet grace.

And finally, the river flows out into the horizon, merging with the vast ocean, the great stream of life...