

Years 5 & 6

2nd Place: Sasmitha Thebuwana  
Year 6, Harrisdale Primary School

## The Sea

Turquoise sea scintillated outwards from the sand, ultimately pouring over the edge of the earth and colliding with the bright sky. The water lapped at the edges of Marlin's boat, as gently as a cradle rocking a child. The sea had sustained his village for eons, nourishing them with its food, letting them swim in its endless depths, and collapse onto its shores, to watch the beautiful sunset. Slowly leading his boat back to shore, fish jumped out from beside it, sending cascades of clear water into the air. The salty ocean breeze ran its fingers through Marlin's hair lovingly, as a mother would, as the boat beached on the tawny sands of the shore. As he climbed out of the boat and sat on the sand, he knew that there was no better place to be than the ocean.

As he woke up and stretched his legs, Marlin walked into his kitchen. A few minutes later, the smell of fried sardines enticed his nostrils as he sat down at his kitchen table. Through the chipped glass windows, the unmistakable shape of a barge was visible. In comparison, if the barge was a paper boat, then Marlin's boat would have been an atom. It had leviathan propellers jutting imposingly from the stern, and a gleaming white hull that glittered like gold under the sun. Meanwhile, the local fishermen gathered their hooks and lines, bundled in pairs into their wooden dinghies, and set off out of the bay. They cast their nets and waited patiently, in hope of their next big catch. However, as the sun sank below the horizon, Marlin looked at the windows and expected to see a raucous pack of fishermen with overflowing baskets, but instead, long, despondent lines trailed off to homes in the village, nothing in their holds. He risked a second look and his heart nearly stopped. Only yesterday, the anglers' holds had been overflowing with fish, which the people of the village were thankful for. But today, nearly no food or anything else was caught. Marlin had a feeling, deep down in his soul, that something was going terribly, terribly wrong.

As Marlin laid down to sleep that night, he had a vision. As soon as his head hit the pillow, vivid images of struggling fish, their eyes wide open in terror, and coral that seemed to weep with fear. Marlin, who felt so strongly about the sea, sat bolt upright, clammy sweat clinging to his arms, legs, and face. He took long breaths and gazed out of the window at his bedside. The moon shone onto the black water, illuminating a pearlescent stairway to heaven. The pure beauty of the ocean was what made thousands of villagers before him so attached to the oceans, and in return, the ocean cared and comforted them, supporting the village in a way that no other environment elsewhere could come close to. Surely his visions had not been true? After all, it had just been a dream. Shaking his head, he walked to the kitchen and got himself a glass of water. Soon enough, he dozed off fitfully at the table.

The rising sun slowly shed light on the glistening water as Marlin boarded his trusty boat. The glimmering water wiped away all his concerns from the night before, smiling. The

ocean never failed to bring a spot of beauty to his day. As he pulled the ripcord, the engine chugged like a lethargic lion before it finally started up. As Marlin sped out to sea, he couldn't help noticing that the mysterious barge was sluggishly travelling towards the open ocean. He wheeled his boat around and it came to a juddering halt. As the boat stopped, the salty sea breeze was overpowered by a foul stench. Slowly, he glanced over the edge of the boat. Instead of pure, coruscating blue water, what greeted him was a cloudy mass that seemed to emanate throughout the dark ocean. Marlin rummaged in his hold, pulled out his scuba gear, and instantaneously plunged into the murky depths. As he descended towards the seabed, a lumbering form materialised in his peripheral vision. A behemoth net was being trawled across the seabed, ensnaring sea life regardless of species or size as they darted around the water, frantically trying to escape. He paled, as flashes of his visions pulsed inside his worried mind. Marlin felt like that last domino was now on the edge of tipping.

Returning from the shore, Marlin sprinted into his room and flopped onto his bed, as limp and lifeless as a wet cloth. He could hear the many other fishermen like him who had gone out to sea hopeful after a day of failure but returned with nothing in their creels once again. The dull thuds of their thongs slapping and stirring the sand echoed throughout the night as they walked towards their abodes, shoulders drooping and heads sagging. They all knew that they would no longer be able to commune and dine together and have the same meals and nutrition the ocean had provided for them before the barge had come along. Furthermore, their love of the ocean pained them to see the dark clouds that scattered across the bay. Without the ocean, simply put, the community would be in tatters without the loving protection of the ocean. It all tied back to one thing. The barge. The huge vessel that had been lying in wait for weeks, like a tiger about to pounce. But in the end, it had. Lying on his bed as the waves splashed at the shore like desperate pleas for help, Marlin knew that he had to do something.

As he woke up the next morning, Marlin had a clear idea of what to do. He sat up and gazed at the whitewashed block of buildings that was the council. He pulled on his best clothes and walked out of his house. The walk along the shore was pleasant, but the cloudy ocean and the barge were present. He knew that he should feel hatred towards the barge, but he couldn't help thinking that like them at present, they had no nourishment. But instead of offloading it on others, they should be taught to remain equal with everybody and still find ways to support their community. As Marlin arrived at the council block, the members greeted him. He talked about how they should work together with the owners of the barge to create support for them.

As the sun set into the sea, creating an opalescent red, orange and yellow sunset, Marlin stood on the edge of the chalky limestone cliffs and smiled. Gentle waves lapped against the shore, creating a perfect rhythm of harmony. He knew that the ocean and his village would be safe and back to normal once more.