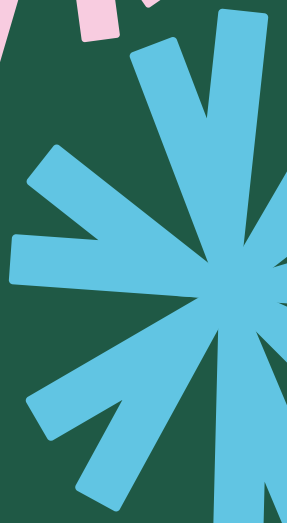


Young Poet Laureate

Anthology

2026



Featuring a poem by
UK Poet Laureate Simon Armitage

Young Poet Laureate

Anthology 2026

National Literacy Trust

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Introduction

The National Literacy Trust and the National Poetry Centre are proud to share with you the Young Poet Laureate Anthology for 2026. Born from the growing success of the Young Poet Laureate Programme, which began in West Yorkshire and has since flourished into a nationwide poetry movement, this collection captures the voices of young people writing with courage, curiosity and conviction. Alongside these young voices, the anthology is accompanied by a wonderful poem, *The Loan*, dedicated by UK Poet Laureate Simon Armitage.

The programme kicked off in November 2025 with Young Poets Week, with over 1000 schools taking part. More than 17,000 young people across England took part in writing workshops delivered by 54 professional poets, and over 38,000 students joined online masterclasses. More than 1100 young writers submitted their work for the chance to become Young Poet Laureate for their region, and the standard was astonishing: bold, thoughtful and full of the kind of insight that reminds us why poetry matters.

From that remarkable pool, entries from 120 young poets were shortlisted from across the regions – West Yorkshire, the North, the Midlands, London, the Southeast and the Southwest. Their poems, gathered here, form a vivid snapshot of a generation thinking deeply about the world they live in and the world they are inheriting. You will find poems about identity, climate, heritage, mental health, politics, family, philosophy and the small but magical details of everyday life. There are tributes to loved ones,

reflections on seaside holidays, meditations on war and celebrations of hope. This collection is proof that poetic creativity remains an essential outlet for young people to make sense of their experiences and express the vitality of their imagination.

Thank you to the educators across the country who have championed this programme, and to the professional poets whose guidance helped nurture the poetic voices of tomorrow. Above all, thank you to the young poets who have shared their poetry here with such honesty, imagination and courage. Their words remind us just how much creativity is thriving in young people across the country.

About the National Poetry Centre

The National Poetry Centre is the UK's first dedicated national headquarters, connecting people to poetry from all cultures and backgrounds. A unique hub for awards, events, performances, exhibitions, workshops, open-mic nights, a library, archives, digital access and more, it is also a champion of poetry in schools, healthcare settings, community centres and public spaces across the country. Based in Leeds and guided by the vision of the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, the National Poetry Centre has been created to support and celebrate poetry everywhere in the UK.

About the National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed. Over the last 30 years, we have continued to work with people who need us the most, supporting schools, families and communities on a local and national level.

Our Young Writers Programme supports schools to develop lasting writing for pleasure practices with the view that every young person is a writer. Over the last ten years, we have developed a range of writing programmes based on our evidence-based 'three-pillar model' for writing that emphasises the importance of memorable experiences, working with professional authors and providing a real audience and purpose for writing.

The Loan by Simon Armitage

I borrowed a book from the village library
and never took it back. It was bigger than me,
I had to wheel it home on a hurry-cart
made from an old pram. The pages
were like swimming pools and sometimes
I fell in, and when it flapped its wings
it hovered over the kitchen table –
that's how I learned to fly.

In the pictures the people spoke real words
and the letters glowed like neon insects –
I could read in the dark after lights out.
One day I'll hand it over, go up to the desk
and pay the three million quid fine
but not for a few more years, because
that book is my roof and my bed
and I haven't finished writing it yet

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LONDON

KEY STAGE 2

Identity

He sits and watches, he trills at the foxes
He rubs and cleans, he chews my jeans
He jumps and he zooms, he bounds into rooms
He's a fluff and a floof, he's majestically aloof
He begs for his treats, his mission to eat
He sleeps in strange places, caput after chases
On a bag in the hall, in a box by the wall
On a towel newly washed, in a spot where he's squashed
His fantastic feline quirks, our own very special perks
Some days he's loving, with his head he's a shoving
And bumping and mewling, purring and wooing
He's my cat brother, my friend, a very special blend
Of sweetness and aggression, there's only one question
Who in the house is HIS favourite?
Me of course, no debate about it!

Eddie, Ashmole Primary School

A Cry of Pain

The monsters were never under my bed,
because the monsters were inside my head.
I fear no monsters, for no monster I see,
Because for all this time the monster has been me.

Mirror mirror on the wall
Was I always meant to fall?
Roses white and dying light,
silver's sweet forgiving bite.
They ask 'why?' No answers found.
For I wish, to decompose beneath the ground.
My heart, soulless as if life never touched at all.
My body, now a walking lie, never to be told.
Not yet corpses, still I rot

Trust me! you scream.
But, I am still coughing water, from the last time you let me
drown.
your pity game,
Your life is dedicated to the crown.
And I, fool, believed your hollow sound,
Now echoes of lies resound.
In the house of cruelty, I'm unbound...
A survivor, where hope was never found.

I try to grasp the air,
As I sit here and stare.
The tears streaming down my face
As I realise you have won the race.
But the war is not over!
I am the dagger, no mercy to offer.
I will rise above this pain
And break free from these chains.

Biting my tongue,
So words don't slip out.
The taste of copper,
Sharp in my mouth.
"Penny for your thoughts,"
the saying goes.
But they could never afford the words buried below.
Born out of violence,
Yet sentenced to silence,
laid in unmarked graves.
As I am slowly murdered by things I don't say

Elijah, Ben Jonson Primary School

The Breakdancing Pie

Yo, I'm a toaster in a moonboot, jammin' with a kazoo,
Sippin' on a milkshake made of alphabet soup stew,
My rhymes ride llamas through a disco in Peru,
Wearing monocles and mittens, shoutin' "Peekaboo,
woohoo!"

I got a cactus in a top hat, breakdancin' on a pie,
While a jellybean philosopher debates the reason why,
Banana phones ringin' with a beatbox lullaby,
And my shadows got opinions on the price of apple sky.

I moonwalk on spaghetti, got a passport made of cheese,
My sneakers speak in riddles and my elbows like to sneeze.
I'm the mayor of confusion, got a doctorate in bees,
And I freestyle with a penguin who's allergic to trapeze.

So if you see a unicorn reciting tax law in a cape,
Just know I dropped this nonsense like a logic-shredding
tape.

It's a lyrical mirage, a surrealist escape –
Now pass the glitter pickles, I'm late for my grape!

Samuel, Heathbrook Primary School

The Outdoors

The golden afternoon,
Spilled across the world,
With a gentle honeyed light.

The middle of the emerald field,
Moved like a spark,
Like a daring explorer.

The breeze danced in the morning sky,
Carrying the sweet perfume,
Of wildflowers and cut grass.

The sky, a canvas for restless dreams,
Each stick transformed into a gleaming sword,
Just waiting to be unearthed.

The big tree, bright, echoing, unstoppable,
Breathless but bold,
Tall and twisted.

The bright path ahead shimmered,
Whispering promises of mystery,
The clouds gathered and the wind turned wild.

The outdoors is a living poem,
A kingdom of endless possibilities,
Ethereal and generous.

Nyla, Heathbrook Primary School

The Way of Life

Life is like a rose
It starts as a seed
And grows into something beautiful.
Over time you'll grow thorns of hate
And petals of love.

But when the dark and gloomy days come...
Life slips away from you

You're floating around in the emptiness of your soul
Waiting
Waiting to help the world again.
Waiting
Waiting for your time to shine again.

Suddenly, the bright and warm days come
And you open your petals to the sun

Your soul in another body

Just like life
A rose is always reborn.

Gabi, Holmleigh Primary School

The Borrowed Planet

We did not make these mountains rise.
Nor paint the oceans blue.
We only borrowed sky and soil.
From children yet to come through

What will they inherit from our hands?
A garden or a scar?
The future walks on present acts
On who we choose to be and are

I gave you rivers for your thirst
and forests for your breath.
Yet smoke now crowns my valleys
and my seas are tasting death.

Musawer, Osidge Primary School

Turning 11

Tick tock! it's a 11 o'clock
Grains of sands are running in the hourglass too fast
And I'm not ready!

Not ready for changes that strum my body to a different
tune
A melody out of my control
Leaving me feeling like a rudderless ship in the ocean
Like I'm the only butterfly going through this sudden
metamorphosis.

Not ready to abandon the enchantment of the wilderness
That kept me enraptured in the singing magic of tales
Faint whispers drawn from the depths of time
That sparked dreams of light inside me
Must I leave my imaginings and strand my stories
to write my 11th chapter?

Worry tightens my throat
Invisible shackles pull me down
I push away my tears
Silently forming a cumulonimbus
As long as the clouds don't burst now
I'll be okay.

Tick tock
It's 11 o'clock
And I'm not ready.

Maya, Poplar Primary School

The Feathers of Love

Through the lake they gently glide,
Necks curve to question the water,
Grace combining as they move side by side,
Each being the other's supporter.

White fire that refuses to burn,
Beaks sharp as through though soft as silk,
Coursing through the blue where reflections trim,
Wings rising over the water – smooth as milk.

Marking traces as they rippled through wanders,
Beneath the willow's sigh,
Hums songs of gentle secret meanders,
Mist sleeps delicately where the waters lie.

Elegance steering them along their voyage,
An innocent emblem of timeless dreams,
Wings entertained with silent courage,
Love bared much deeper than it seems.

Hudha, Southville Primary School

Only One Life

Time is not a warning, it's a countdown we pretend not to hear.

Time does not wait for you to be ready.
It's already halfway down the street,
shoes tapping, wind brushing past, while you're still tying your
shoes.

Days, hours, minutes, they keep counting on and on.
Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

But time doesn't have to be measured in clocks.
It's measured in memories,
in risks taken, in love shown.
It's measured in how often you choose to show up instead of
shrinking.

Anyone can plan ahead, anyone can peek into the future.
But later?
Later is a story that isn't always told.

Go out.
Love.
Leap.
Live.

Tell people how much you love them, while they can still hear you.
Take the trip.
Start the thing.
Wear the outfit.

Ask the question.

Because this morning?
It will never happen again.

Speak the truth, before it hardens into regret.
Love people, while their names still light up your face.

Chase what sets your chest on fire,
the kind of fire that makes your knees shake and your voice rise,
not what looks safe on paper.

Time will tap you on the shoulder one day.
And you won't get to ask for just five more minutes.

We have one life – one flickering candle in the wind.
Don't just let it burn, let it blaze.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

Darcey, St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

The Place the Post Can't Reach

The discarded house down in the valley, lost and left behind
when the world moved on.

The solemn stone statues stuck in time, paths that lead to
wreckage and fallen down trees on the edge of terror.

The sweet patch of grass dotted with primroses in contrast
to the tinged ivy that covers the worn, stone paving.

The shade cast by the wavering curtains continues to stalk
the papery pottery that is lit by ghostly lamps and candles.

It is not night, but the house is dark and the study door stays
shut.

Connie, West Green Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

The Lands You Have Known

If you make it back home, to the lands you have known,
with all the lost hope upon the seashore – send us a picture of the
war.

Go back to where you 'came from'. Go back to where you know,
back to your house that flew away, and never came back,
a house dressed in black.
Then back, back to your shed, your tent, your cardboard alley box
with the tear-sodden side that tore: you have no home anymore.

Leave, we insist and hiss and sigh. We print our signs and hold
them high.
Yes, that old boat will do, off with you and you and you –
leave the glimpse of safety that you have known.

It's sort of funny how our conscience
can disappear from our consciousness.

You see, we refuse to accept any other reality than our own,
and like our hate your pain has grown.
we leave your wounds left unmapped and shut our doors
and mutter things that slice your skin.
And empathy we lack because we kill when we stand back.

Words, you have found, cut deeper than knives.
words that make us feel better on this grass-greener side of the
fence –
careless words that are thrown will break hearts like brittle bone

You strangers are not the same
You are un-same, in-same, (it is) insane
that we should could would accept you.
Refugee does not mean alien, but here, it strips humanity.

Perhaps locked in a lorry until the air thinned and you watched
as last breaths were breathed and that night you grieved.
Or thrown into a plastic boat that could not possibly float

with 20 people crammed on board and you watched people faint
and fall
and you felt your mind shatter into fragments, as they slipped
under.

We may not have fired the guns, or poured the smoke into your
lungs,
but when we could have caught you, broken your fall,
we stood back, we let you break, we let your cuts open anew
-telling you to go back to where you cannot.

And so your tears made a river that flowed silently
and the mouth of that river called out desperately.
But we let it seep slowly into the sea
that holds the lost bodies that didn't choose to fall

So if you make it back home, across the endless journey of your
life,
keep a memory of the once loved, once lived, now scarred and
scared,
lands you have known.

Florence, Chestnut Grove Academy

Melanin Dreams

My melanin shines, unbreakable and bright
In my skin, I find my fearless light
Confident, brave and strong I rise, I stand
My head held high, free of speech
Following my dreams with cautious hands.

My melanin shines, unbreakable and bright
My skin tells narratives only I know
A tapestry woven with courage and pride
Stories behind my roots that never hide.
A heritage of justice, deep inside

My melanin shines, unbreakable and bright
Each tone a chapter, rich and intense
In every shade, that history progress
Dreams gushing down into your imagination
Like rivers wild and free, and flow through your heart like
Other such as you and me, in every pulse
A whispered scheme.

But how now does my melanin shine,
Unbreakable and bright, when society
Still can't accept our power and light
People that look like me face struggles and battles
Yet they still fight through shadows and
Stereotypes, they use their voice and
Find that light to achieve their dreams.

But then again I say how does my melanin shine
Unbreakable and bright, when they try to dim
What they don't understand from
Microaggressions to colourism to discrimination
It never ends, but I am much more than the struggles
I face, I am a striking ball of light cracking through

Darkness, a voice with dreams rising above the silence.

So you know what my melanin,

Does shine unbreakable and bright

No matter what the world tries to say or do

Or even change my melanin is my crown my

Melanin is me, it tells a story of strength, resilience

And beauty that cannot be erased nor be ignored,

That's why with every step I take to claim my space, my
worth and

My dreams, I will pursue my right to shine

Unbreakable and bright.

Sienna, Connaught School for Girls

Orphan

My steps echo in the hallway, coffee-coloured floorboards
glossy with water
Frozen memories framed in gold
Foreign eyes that follow me with each slap of my feet
against the floor
The walls caves, my heart clenches with a tight vice of my
ribs
I am an orphan, drifting within life
Watching arms go around children.
Every child but me.

The bedsheets smell like desperation and hollow eyes lick
over my every movement
Kids just like me, curled into balls by their bed sides
They promise a better life, where the sun shines clearly
and lands on faces in rivulets
Where the curtains hang low in wisps and protect us from
the danger outside
But how many curtains can it take to protect us from the
flame of danger lingering beneath our skin?
Nothing, nothing can beat in the pain pulsing inside
I can only watch from the tear-stained lens of my gaze

I take sips of fresh air outside
Clouds dabbed against a cerulean background, tendrils of
pale sunlight ripping through the clouds
My heart is pounding, blood roaring in my ears.
My eyes have gone distant, blurry even.
It's hard to see when all you crave is those distant arms
Arms, eyes, legs that are swallowed by earth

The sun rises and falls like my chest
Within months, my mind has gifted me the present of
forgetting

I finally can cure my disease once thought inevitable
No longer craving the foreign warmth
I can finally exist for my body and my soul
Not the ones resting down below.

Maria, Connaught School for Girls

Swimming

I take the **S**streamline position
And dive, plunge: I'm in.

I start to glide **W**ith grace
And power, I am alone.

I start to slow but with a **f**lick of my leg
The world is mine again.

I am... **m**e. I only hear
The sound of silence;

I **m**imic a plane-
Powerful and ready-

I move **w**ith effortlessnes
And fly-

I know there will be
An **e**nd and it comes

I get out and **g**o
My flight may be over but my journey is not.

Scarlett, Haberdashers' Borough Academy

War Carved its Hunger

1) War carved its hunger into the earth
cities burning, skies torn by steel.
children carried silence in their eyes,
their laughter buried beneath the rubble.

2) We marched through winter's iron teeth,
boots sinking into snow like graves.
Every step was a bargain with death,
every breath a defiance of despair.

3) The ship gleamed – fragile salvation,
a promise against the roar of guns.
Yet the sea, vast and merciless,
swallowed mercy whole in a single night.

4) Salt to the sea, salt to the wound,
names dissolved in the tide of war.
But still, hope clung like a stubborn flame,
refusing to drown in history's storm.

Gunreet, Harris Academy Merton

I Cannot Draw

I have watched
as people mirror the masters,
Paintings,
Sculptures,
Drawings.
Every curve,
Every tint,
Every charcoal phantom
catches my eye
And steals my breaths.
It is a complex force,
To create gold from paper.
I cannot mimic
the shimmer of an iris.
I cannot capture
the salt of the sea in a heavy tear.
So I will write,
I will weave flowers into my phrases
And create maps in my stories
but I cannot coax
my pen to a canvas.
or teach my words to bloom.

I am already trapped by all the nos.
I already believe
that I cannot create
though I know
all it takes is a bit of grit,
I cannot force a love
for a dance
I do not know.
So I will write
and scribble
and carve my voice into these lines

because I cannot draw
but watch as I make
these pages glow.

Latifah, Harris Girls' Academy Bromley

Desi Life

Rice and curry, a comfort song.
Where we all dance and sing along.
Each strand of hair, wiped with coconut oil,
As the Eid samosas begin to boil.
Ammu's shuna rings in the kitchen light,
Baba Ji's voice feels calm and right.
Boroi achar, sour and bright,
Fills every Desh visit with pure delight.
"Baiji, tumi ki ashol Bangla bujha?"
"Fufu, ami bujhi shob kotha ja!"
"Batiji, do you get the real Bangla say?"
"Fufu, I understand all you convey!"
With kana machi and cousins near,
Ludo and hide-and-seek, full of cheer.
Half-Bengali, half-British, I play my part,
They don't mind, they love me with all their heart.
Together we chant, our voices hum,
"Isum Bisum, Takra Bisum" we all join in, having fun.
Laughing and spinning, our voices all one,
Hold up, the fun's only just begun!
"Moyna! Tiya! Tun Tuni Faqi!" she names,
Our little hearts take joyful wings.
I'm Moyna, Ammu's little bird.
I play sports, trip a lot, and draw what's in my world.
Tiya and Tun Tuni run wild with glee,
Ammu's little birds, full of energy!
My friends know me as 'Fari' or 'Riri', the eldest, leading the way,
Half British, half Bengali, a mix every day.
I climb, I leap, I do as I please,
A little daredevil, ignoring society's keys.
Like Bengal tigers, fierce, breaking moulds.
I stand proud as a woman, fearless and bold,
From my mum, I draw strength worth more than gold.

Her courage and love light the path I roam,
With her as my guide, I've truly found home.

Fariha, Mulberry School for Girls

Words

Words are like bullets
They're gasoline to the fire
The silver blades stabbing the backs of the betrayed

They're like glue, sticking with you where you go
They can be on the brink of good and evil
The bridge of life and death

Words can either wound or heal
So take heed
Be careful what you wish and say
Indeed!

Ibtisam, Regent High School

Nothing We Love Survives Time

Have you ever stepped back
and really thought about life?
Not the pretty Instagram-filter kind,
not the “I’m fine” kind,
but the late-night, chest-tight,
why-am-I-even-here kind.

Have you ever realised
that everything ends?
Like... everything.
That in 246 years,
no one’s gonna remember me,
or you,
or your pet dog that slept on your chest
when you cried the first time life broke you.
No one will remember the people you loved
so fiercely it hurt,
or the ones who left marks on your heart
so deep it still bleeds when you touch them.

Have you ever thought about how fast
a whole world disappears?
How names fade,
voices quiet down,
and smiles vanish from memory
like they were never here at all.
How we spend years trying to be “somebody,”
but in the end
we all turn into the same silence,
the same dust,
the same story no one bothers to read again.

And it’s sad —
because we spend so much time

trying to make people proud,
trying not to fall apart,
trying to pretend we're strong
when we're breaking quietly in corners
no one sees.

We chase perfection
like it means something,
when really,
life is just a countdown
no one knows they're losing.

Maybe that's the part that hurts the most —
that you could give the world
your whole heart,
your whole soul,
your whole everything,
and time will still take it away
like it was nothing.

But still...
here we are.
Breathing.
Trying.
Hurting.
Hoping that maybe,
just maybe,
something we did will matter
even if the whole world forgets our names.

Because sometimes the saddest truth is this:
life doesn't last...
but the pain we carry
feels like it always will.

Kaiah, Sedgehill Academy

Whispers

A new day dawns, something wrong in the space
I'm hesitant to get out of my only safe place
Something at the back of my head
Feeds me thoughts, like wildfire they spread

They come and go
Mostly when I'm alone
They strike with a whisper
Then the echo gets louder
“Just give up” “You're not good enough”

They pierce my heart, something hard and tough,
Then a sudden pause, why do I feel watched?
I feel unsafe, their glares trapping me in a box
Judgement from others makes me uneasy
I want to run, where no one can judge me

Overstimulated with noises and sounds
That suddenly stop...no one's around
Was I just imagining it? I quietly ask

I look up, everyone is covered with a mask
A mask of their own problems, their own types of struggles
Even though they seem arrogant, they've got their own puzzles
Constantly finding pieces to complete their perfect image
They all have their own way, their own pages to finish

The feeling of piercing eyes recedes with the noise
I finally feel safe, no one I must avoid
These are my feelings, but others feel the same
All of us have to find our own way
They may have clipped our wings, but we will learn to fly
Letting no one drag us down, we aim higher than the sky.

Rose, Trinity Catholic High School

MIDLANDS

KEY STAGE 2

I Want to be a Poet

I want to be a poet, not quiet, not small.
I'll throw my words like lightning thunderous through every wall.
I'll rhyme, I'll climb, I'll rise, I'll shine.
A star in the making this voice is mine.

I want to be a poet but I couldn't find a rhyme.
So, I searched around the world but I just wasted my time.
So, I went back to my town to give a lecture about not wasting a dime.
A star in the making this voice is mine.

I want to be a poet and I know I am a poet but I'll forever know this is my prime.
And I'll say it one more time.
A star in the making this voice is mine.

Emmanuel, Burton Fields School

The Last Oak of the Meadow

The sun casts long my ancient shadow
My branches wither over the meadow
The flowers tinted orange and flushed red
Vivid and colourful they lie on their bed

The generations fail and fade
They die and perish in their own shade
They fall blind as those before
My mind is old it holds great lore

My strength now fades my end draws near
Death awaits – I feel it here
I've watched the meadow fail and fade
For I have lived long, and long I have stayed

Aiden, Colmore Junior School

Where the Dune Whispers

Ancient Arabia.
The home of ancient traditions.
The weather there compared to here,
I wish there lay my precious home.

The food WOW, the taste so fine.
The kind-hearted people, to the well-decorated shops.
Ancient and Modern Arabia I wish there lay my precious home.

This is the kingdom of sand.
About to be of oil.
Maybe soon to be my home.

I went there with a shoulder full of pressure and a load of tense.
Came back loosened and chilled.

The stunning beauty of this land nobody can explain.
Go there and experience the hidden treasures of this land.
This place will give me and you a bloom.

I have a couple more words before this takes an end.

The Mosques, full of peace and tranquility.
Ah, just so peaceful there at night.

Well that's enough for now.
Sadly it has come to an end.

Eesa, Country Bridge Primary School

The Oceans Power of Fury

Master of my realm,
I am the ocean.
Challenging the heavens,
As I soar.

Like little ants,
Crawling over my skin.
Pollution and plastic,
Irritates my waves.

Turning into a bloodthirsty beast,
A ruthless titan broke out from my soul of stone,
Dragging evil humans into their watery graves,
Roaring to stop polluting my waves.

I seek my vengeance of those who kill,
By sending my iron fists pounding on the earth.
I promise to stop until the humans quit polluting me,
But no, they will not, so they will feel the power of my rage.

A devil's cry rumbles from the underworld,
Ready for destruction...revenge.
My waves thrash and crash,
Destroying everything in my path.

Like a hurricane of malice,
I attack like a lion.

I will never stop,
Until humans have learnt their lesson.

Mirsab, Country Bridge Primary School

The Sea

The sea's a mirror
All shiny and cold
You can see your reflection
That it may hold

The sea's a home
A cosy warm house
Soft and safe
As quiet as a mouse

The sea's a beast
A dangerous killer
It steals and hides
Gnaws through a ship's pillar

The sea's a dump
A giant bin
Full of old stuff
Plastic and tin

The sea's an army
Nature's protector
Fighting a war
A bravery collector

Annika, Great Witley CofE Primary School

Whispers in the Cold

From frigid depths, a silver flash,
They breach the surface,
A constellation scattered across the dark water.
Under the pale moon,
Their calls echo the ancient,
Wild, heart of a world untouched by green.
Their wings, clipped by the sky,
Found freedom in the cold, clear, oceans embrace.
Their liquid eyes, dark as oil
Hold the quiet secrets of the wild earth.
They are lessons in resilience,
In the art of huddling against the storm,
A shared warmth in a frozen land.

Yelyzaveta, Holy Trinity CofE Primary School

All Good Things Come to an End

How do I keep going now.
That I tore us apart
I stitched our wings together
Not with glue, or tape
I welled melted gold on top of your rip
No resin this time.
Just a happy mistake, made of memories.
I held your thin wings to my own,
And pored the melted gold on it,
And froze it forever
I felt the weight of it daily.
Did you?
You'd be offended if I asked.
You asked for it too
You looked at the shine, you are aware,
Laughter and confusion in your eyes,
So much work we did together
And it felt so alone.
So much work,
And yet a simple push
When I was a child, I touched a butterfly's wings, with wet hands...
I didn't know not to
I can feel it now,
The soft tissue paper disintegrating on my hand
The flesh broke from its bones
And it still flew away.
I didn't mean any of it...
Is it too late to say sorry?

Eliza, Holy Trinity CofE Primary School

Christmas Trees

Finding a short, slim tree, pinecone green,
Is the best for every home.
When you set out the tree,
Moments spread with glimmer and glee.
Ornaments hung one by one,
Tree leaves rattle like the wind.
Putting tinsel on the tree,
Spinning it round and round,
The ends are never found!
Tiny fairy-lights sparkling on the tree,
Blue, red, green, anything you'd imagine!
Putting the star on top,
Fun crackers will "POP!!!"

Emily, SS Mary & John's Catholic Primary Academy

The Thin Noodle

In a pot, lay a thin noodle,
As thin and as white as paper.

It was cooked in an ancient special way,
Passed down generations to me today.

I tossed it in the air,
I stirred it about.

Twisting and turning around a pot,
Until...stop!

“Phew”, muttered the noodle,
Then came the seasoning,
“it’s starting to rain!”

I spun it again,
Like a ride at the fair.
“Urgggh!”, said the noodle,
“Do you even care?”

Finished at last,
Slid onto a plate.
The thin noodle,
Curled up a figure of eight.

Manha, St Benedict’s Primary School

Tiger

I am an exotic tiger,
I don't eat monochrome striped-zebras or 2-horned bulls
I devour succulent, scrumptious nebulas and devour the
inky, icy rings of Saturn.

I am a unique tiger,
I don't drink glass-clear water.
I slurp upon vile, viscous, vinegary magma fresh from the
sun's core or guzzle the chug jugs from the perilous
dimension of Fortnite.

I am a mythical tiger,
I don't sleep in a rigid cage they call "home".
I sleep in jewel-made palaces on the brink of pink sunsets
or doze off on the fluffiest of fluffy clouds.

I am a special tiger,
I don't hunt dashing deers.
I stalk multi-coloured supernovas or consume dark matter
from the deep, shadowy void of space.

This is why they call me... THE APEX PREDATOR!!!

Yosef, Welford Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

Reconstructing the Scoliotic Knight

Crimson roses crown thorned stems,
A cream core, pure as the night is dreary.
Senses heightened at the pinnacle of the fear:
The solitary thud of a heartbeat.
Moist pools lie below – maroon laced,
Piercing red from a fleshy mire.
One dizzying blow to the temple
And the palace walls come crashing with it.
Trampled like the dirt beneath a hoof,
Paraded bare and unsheathed – a villain.
Last breaths snatched as nothing more than a
Machiavellian miscreant,
'Thou wretch, thou coward!' inked the bard,
spit out as disdainfully as an angel from hell.
His portrait – no longer honoured art
For now he is painted as a devious crook:
smothering pillows and the graves of boys,
His stooped frame a stamp of iniquity.
Contemptuous onlookers sneer,
Icarus lies before them – beneath them
His weary bones lie low,
under centuries of passing feet,
Under paws of a wily vixen
– she too runs from persecutors.
She pads swiftly away,
slinking between the whispers
of a disgraced monarch
Fleeing to safety
from the high-horses,
and the baying hounds.
A King's Power
reduced
to a tarmac grave
Trampled like the day

white petals
fell
to make way
for a
blood-red
crown.

Lois, Brockington College

Memories

Memories are an update of each daily experience
Filled with reconsolidations of so many emotions.

The scent of an old song brought a flood of bittersweet
memories, each one a thread in the rich, complex weave of
her past, making her heart ache with both joy and a gentle
sadness.

Day and night are like a running river, flowing continuously
from the bright ripple of morning into the deep, dark
current of evening,

While her memories filled up gaps with abundant feelings
that write a summary of regret in her heart. As soon as she
cries out in pain, small strips of wounds that permeate in
her memories bite like a bee's sting.

Following the flow of day and night, the memories will
stick to her skin like wax, and hurt like blazing flames while
she cries in silence of pain and rage.

With no one to talk to, her feelings are tiled down as
though they lived in the ground.

She shouts out songs of questions as her eyes peep
through the sky.

Why will no one hear her cry?

If only she could solve her "why" maybe she could still
shout for joy.

Day and night were still running as though he was
competing with time, but will her bad and painful memories
turn into her shout of joy?

She knew life was as hard as a rock and was waiting for
her to fall.

Before she could stand on her feet and check the time on
the clock, she was met with a heavy shock.

Overcoming her fear, she moves to end the pain and
strives to change the faith of her lifelong memories of
sorrow.

Many different types of her memories stir up emotions
when they are met as her life slowly melts. Life had not
given her a hint of the future but she lived to see emotions
trample on her torn heart.

Though it was hurtful, she had a taste of the bittersweet
soup that life hid from others.

Shalom, Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

Colours

My hair was once red,
Like a bundle of red roses
Like a splash of blood on fresh snow,
Like an erupting volcano.

My hair was once blonde,
Like the sun on a warm summer's day
Like gold or marigolds,
Like a buttercup that freshly bloomed.

My hair was once green,
Like a field of freshly cut grass
Like a lush forest full of pines and moss,
Like an emerald that sits on top of a ring.

My hair was once imperial blue,
Like the Mariana trench
Like the night sky, lit up by stars,
Like a sapphire, freshly polished.

I wish my hair was baby pink,
Like a little girl's dress that twirls in the wind
Like the tutu of a ballerina that spins and spins,
Like a strawberry macaron.

I wish my hair was rainbow,
Every colour next to each other
All of them in peace with one another,
No need for rain and sun.

I wish the world was like rainbow hair,
Peace and Equality for all
No more bombs, no more fear for life,
No need for good days and bad.

I wish the world had a fresh start,
With fields and fields of dancing grass
Where everyone laughs and laughs,
And tears are a thing of the past.

Zuzanna, Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

The Oyster and the Pearl: My Quiet Crown

I stand before the mirror,
my fingers tracing soft folds of fabric,
a pin between my lips, trying once again
to make this strip of fabric sit just right.

And I laugh to myself because somehow,
I'm stressing over a piece of cloth
that just won't behave.

But then I pause.
Because it's not just a piece of cloth

It's the oyster that guards my pearl,
the trust I place in Allah's (God's) wisdom,
the quiet strength that wraps around my soul.
It's patience, grace, and faith woven together

Each fold shows an essence of my courage,
And each pin highlights my strength
It's not about hiding, it's about doing what's right
about pleasing Allah (God), about fulfilling my purpose

Some days I fight with it, some days I fight with myself.
But every day I stand tall, my crown staying proud on my
head

Because this fabric reminds me that true beauty isn't in
what the world can see
it's in the peace that lives quietly beneath,
the belief that glows within,
and the faith that frees my heart

My hijab isn't a burden, it's my calm in the storm,
the quiet pride I wear, my devotion in every fold.

It's the whisper that says, "Your patience is your light and Allah sees it"

It's my identity.
My softness and my strength.
My faith, flowing gently over my shoulder

So yes, I may laugh
when it slips, when the pin pricks,
when the folds don't fall the way I planned

but when it's finally in place, I feel it
that quiet pride, that gentle power, that closeness to my
Creator.

Because it's not just a piece of cloth.
It's my crown. My comfort. My connection to Allah (God).

My oyster. And I - I am the Pearl

Madiha, Crown Hills Community College

Ocean Unknown

My mind thrashes like ocean waves, less a thought and
more a riptide.

Plangent; unforgiving; stubborn.

Nobody to listen, no compass to guide it,

Somewhere the ordinary goes to perish.

I strip the land where your kind resides, somewhere you
insist I do not belong.

Desolate; Hollowed; Forsaken.

My deep is blue muscle evading the tide's harness,
my secrets remain abyssal, veiled from the white noise of
your surface.

I dredge up a version of myself the salt couldn't quite kill:

Remainders.

Fragments of the person I was before the 'wave'
enthralled my senses.

Signs to remind me if I ever was a person at all.

Sailing your vessels on my creases of blue, you wish to
tame me.

You yearn to unveil my creviced distortions.

Seeing the imperfect beneath opalescent refuge.

Aphonic; unbridled; fortunately, ephemeral.

I am the ocean, my mind the waves you appear to despise,
something temporary and therefore inconsequential.

Zoe, Hadley Learning Community

Nan's Bumblebee Girl

As busy as a bee, my Nan used to say,
I'm busier than the whole hive,
My Jiggles and Wiggles the wings from my back,
My laughter is bubbly, alive,
You were born of the fairies, my Nan used to say,
Made a beautiful child of dreams and clay,
And busy as a bee the light shines in me,
You're my very own Bumblebee girl.

The bees in my garden are lazy now,
They Bumble around in the grass,
The summer is growing to a close, and the sun,
Melted to honey in their hearts,
Shines golden within them whilst we snuggle down,
The blankets we wrap round and round,
But busy as a bee the light shines in me,
I'm Nan's Bumblebee girl.

The Christmas movies have doubled in price,
The shops have elves in the windows,
The crackle of fireworks still ring in my ears,
The clouds blowing frost with a hint of snow,
The grass has grown yellow and turned underfoot,
The fireplaces billow ashes and soot,
But busy as a bee the light shines in me,
I'm Nan's Bumblebee girl.

The tips of tiny unfurling green shoots,
The frost that has melted to water,
The streams that overflow and the bluebirds that sing,
The snow drops Mother Earth's daughters,
And beneath the pale rays, the first butterfly flies,
The Honeybees buzz, populate the skies,
And busy as a bee the light shines in me,
I'm Nan's Bumblebee girl.

Zoe, Myton School

Don't Put Pigeons in Politics

Pathetic is a nation
Built on sirens and selective hearing
Twisted with power and sickening greed
Rehearsing its downfall baring its teeth

Grinning
And rotting
And scrap sniffing grovelling

With their boots on our backs
They march on our bent spines
Cutting out our tongues
Pulling out our teeth
They ricochet what we fire and muzzle our grief

So, clink your China teapots, force your porcelain smiles
Clutch your pearls and wither in your silver spoon desires
Smear your ink over and change every crooked illusion
Distort every press allegation with your master trained
delusions

Don't flap your feathers, left or right
Don't bite or peck, or coo or squawk
Please come scatting on our parade
But don't put pigeons in politics if you want a say

Phoebe, Pershore High School

Finding Shadows

I learnt to look for shadows
Not where the light is loud
But where it softens
And learns to listen.

They hide under chairs of memories
Behind a spine of a book,
In the pause between two breaths
I almost didn't take.

A shadow is not the dark-
It's proof of light nearby,
A quiet signature saying
Someone stood here once.

I find them stretching at dusk,
Longer than fear, thinner than doubt
Teaching me that absence
Still has a shape.

And when I gather them gently,
They point me back to the sun
Without ever asking me
To stop being human.

Jessica-Raj, West Bromwich Collegiate Academy

My Name is Daisy-May Not Daisy

My name is Daisy-May not Daisy.
Daisy is quiet, she keeps to herself
Daisy acts and dresses like everyone else.
She can't stand up for herself or anyone else.
Daisy is not me.
I'm Daisy-May,
She blasts music that is considered as 'weird' and is
passionate about her interests
Daisy-May is still quiet but not as afraid to be herself with
people she trusts
Daisy-May reads poems in libraries and performs on stage
And she's not afraid to do so
Yet Daisy creeps into her life,
I yearn to be Daisy-May, but Daisy is easier to say,
Daisy rolls off the tongue better
I'm not Daisy, Daisy is not me
So, when I ask to be called Daisy-May,
It's not because I want to be annoying,
It's because I want to be Daisy-May, carefree, passionate
Not shy, and afraid to be who I'm destined to be.
If I wanted to be scared and quiet I would be Daisy but I'm
not because,
My name is Daisy-May not Daisy.

Daisy-May, The Banovallum School

An Ode to the World We Live On

How to help:

To save the world:

- Mix some photovoltaic cells into a solar panel
- Leave to bake in the warm sun on your roof

To protect the world:

- Harvest some metal from the Earth's wonderful crust
- Beat into a turbine and leave to stand in the great blue sea

To spare the world:

- Make a hole to the world's mantle
- Insert a metal rod and use it to
- Create a geothermal plant

The world is a living breathing entity

It should be preserved at all costs

Not like olives or eggs, in brine and vinegar

But like it is now

Cared for by generations

Flourishing and growing

How We Hinder:

To kill the world

- Take a hydrogen atom and slam into another atom
- Repeat a hundredfold at equal spaced out intervals

To destroy the world:

- Don't bother to pick up that plastic bag that is blown into the water you drink

- Be of hard heart and bitterness because you can
 - Drop bombs and start wars and waste those resources

Because nothing should live if you're not happy (eye roll)
Be that one who could change this world

Because Gaia breaths
Like you and me
In, and out,
Like the ebb of the sea.
She should be allowed to grow like us
Not die like the breeze.
Because of our buses,
To her we are fleas.

So end this horror,
This Abomination Nation,
Before Gaia Ends
Us all

Titus, The University of Birmingham School

NORTH

KEY STAGE 2

Billy

Before you were born I wasn't the same
everyday you light up my eyes
although I hate your

TANTRUMS

and

CRIES

and most of all Nappies (dirty nappies)

YUCK!

I love your

smile

laugh

and

eyes

I want you to know I will

ALWAYS

be your voice until you

find your own

Think of a life without you

WAIT!

Why would I do that?

This is better!

remember I have a space in my heart for yours

I am more lucky than anybody to be

able to call you my brother

When its bedtime you

SCREAM

and

CRY

Your autism can't take any of my love

for you (eventhough it is endless)

In my eyes you're mine

You taught me love and my trueself

I have had my baby life now its my turn

to make yours

FABulous!

Love you my baby, curly tots, pumpkin, mostly

Lifesaver

Lots of love coming your way

love from

Big Sis

Sophia, Beech Grove Primary School

The Brutal, British Weather

What can we do?
Nothing, that's right,
It will always stay the same.
Our cold, freezing winters will last forever,
And our random, roasting summers where we feel the
flame.
The funniest thing I've ever seen was a woman with an
umbrella at Crosby Beach,
She pulled it out as rain started to thump down and that
was when she started to preach.
"Oh you silly, little fools," she cried as she shook her head
in dismay,
"You would know about our weather if you had been here
for just one day!"
We all knew she was joking about us being fools,
Then we have those icy winters where I think everyone has
those hot chocolate rules.
We snuggle up around the blazing, warm fire,
As we play our game of Cluedo each having a winning
desire.
Oh but don't get me started on those stupid, summer days,
But you can't go wrong with a nice lunch around the beach
in one of those fancy cafes.
However you better be quick,
And you, my friend, know why.
That ice cream you have now won't last forever but don't
cry.
Because you know what is coming,
That Autumn, ah yes.
A time for you to take about one breath.
Heat wise Autumn is just right,
But then Winter is just around the corner to scare you and
give you a fright.
Spring is just too rainy,

I know I'm not here to moan.
But I'm British so I'm annoyed to the bone.
These phenomenons do make me smile,
The bright, vibrant flowers with long, green stems.
But the rain, the rain cascades down your window like
sapphire gems.
I suppose I can't control the equator,
Nor the temperature of the sun.
However, why can't it stay fine for a jog or a run?
So there you have it,
My dear, little rant.
And also my dear, little friend,
Remember one thing that.
If you can control the heat,
Come underneath my wing.
I'll treat you with such deference,
And I promise you I will never be mean.

Anaya, English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

The Olympics

The Olympics,
The Olympics,
Rings of fire,
Different sports full of desire,

Rugby: grab, tackle, aim for the try line,
Cycling: quickly round the track to finish on time,

The Olympics,
The Olympics,
Different people come to inspire,
Determined athletes we require,

Judo: use power and force to defeat your foe,
Javelin: race to the start line before you let go,

The Olympics,
The Olympics,
Bringing people together,
Spreading hope and pleasure,

Weightlifting: use all your strength to reach up high,
Rock climbing: the limit is the sky,

The Olympics,
The Olympics,
Bringing the people together,
The Olympics is the world's pleasure.

Emily, Hayfield Lane Primary School

Blackpool

Do you like Blackpool Beach?
If so, you're in the right place.
The waves splash as the jet skis blast,
golden sand glows as the kids laugh.

The glimmering, fragile ocean
is like a restless giant, never sleeping.
Powdery sand splatters
beneath our feet like an ancient shield, cool and soft.

Arcade games beep as birds sweep by.
Along Blackpool Beach,
bright lights gleam and waves whisper secrets
through a silver stream.

The wind smells sweet of salt
and fried dough, while laughter dances
through the neon light.
Children cheer with sugary delight

As colourful cars rush past, engines screaming near.
Dancers spin beside the glowing pier,
while the sea hums songs only dreamers hear.

Blackpool Beach glows gold at the close of day,
as the waves clap time and worries drift away.

Aamaya, Lowerplace Primary School

Alan

Alan is a family man he is also my grandad,
We spend a lot of time which, makes me very glad.
We sing in in choir on a Wednesday and play footy in the
park,
On the weekend I sleepover and watch movies in the dark.

Alan isn't well at the minute, but he is also my grandad,
He's not as active at the mo, which makes me very sad.
We called him Uncle Fester when all his hair fell out,
But with love and determination he will get better there's
no doubt.

Alan is down to earth but he is also my grandad,
He's also a funny man, really one of the lads.
To all his girls of whom I am one, he's really very kind.
A better grandad in all the world...
He will be hard to find!

Charlotte, Much Woolton Catholic Primary School

If I Could I Would

Handwriting is torture
It shouldn't exist
If I could I would
Throw it in the abyss
My teacher Mr Pilkington
Does not agree
If he needs a volunteer
He always picks on me
So handwriting's the worst
And I hope you agree

Uniform is horrid
It shouldn't be a thing
If I could I would
Change everything
No more annoying shoes
Or stupid frilly tie
I want to be a hot dog
Or Santa with mince pies

Swimming is stupid
It ruined all my day
And no matter how much I despise it
I still don't get my way
The answer should be
Very very very
Clear to see
But even though I've got a point
My teacher ignores me

So now that you know my life
Please let me move
On
If I get a place

I'll fix it up
Have a good time
All the freedom will be mine

Chloe, St Andrew's Church of England Primary School

Terrifying Tornado

That tornado they said was as crazy as crazy
As crazy as a crazed tiger or when you're hungry
That tornado they said spun spun and spun
Faster than a cheetah or lightning
That tornado they said grew grew and grew
Quicker than the speed of sound

That tornado they said ate ate and ate
Ate every single building
Every single one
For three roaring days
It danced wildly wildly
Wildly for ages
Uncontrollably
As wild as a monkey

James, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Blue is...

Blue is sad, Blue is gloom.
It's the feeling you get when one falls in a tomb.
You can't escape from Blue, unless
that is
you know what to do.

Blue is sad
Blue is gloom
and most of the time there's nothing to do.
So you
yes you
if you know what to do
then you indeed can escape from blue.
So ladies and gentlemen,
boys and girls,
children of all ages,
don't worry because with a little bit
of yellow
it's true you can escape from blue,
and hopefully after reading this,
you can go phew
and if you're haunted by blue
then always remember
that the spirit of yellow will always be your fellow
and that you will indeed escape from the grasp of blue.

Bobby, St Edmund's RC Primary School

I Am Me

I am brave because of my story
Finished treatment and now in glory.
When I look in the mirror, I feel like me
Funny, great and full of glee.

At five years old, no longer a kid,
Some said, "You missed school. You're so lucky!" As if!
At six years old, my hair all gone
Not wanting it to get worse but it still went on.

At seven years old, I fell behind
At Leeds Hospital, scared not fine.
I held onto my Chemo Duck so so tight
When at hospital overnight.

At eight years old, it was done
I rang the bell, but not the hospital one.
My hair regrown in pigtails then
Now, in plaits, at the age of ten.

My family and friends got me here.
Now, I no longer live in fear.
I still have the memories inside my head.
I am me and it's been said.

Lottie, Warter Church of England Primary School

My Dream Dinner (NOT My Mum's)!

For dinner, I want...
A cake, a bowl of jelly
Something yummy to fill my belly
Like a biscuit or a bun
Or maybe a....
UH!
Oh mum...
What is this green stuff all over my plate?
The stuff that I hate?
A tomato?
A bowl of broccoli?
NO!
NO!
NO!
I want jelly to fill my belly!

Connie, Warter Church of England Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

She Counts in Eights

She's almost thirteen, trainers scuffed by dance,
a bedroom mirror turned into a stage.
Musical theatre posters line the walls like promises of her
future,
The bedroom light her single spotlight.

She hums half-learnt tunes, whilst completing her
homework,
pencil tapping time in four-four hope.
She counts in eights, when brushing her hair and sings
while washing dishes
at the sink, applause replaced by dripping taps.

After homework, she practices turns,
careful not to wake the house.
Her voice learns courage in the quiet,
each scale a step to somewhere brighter.

She knows the West End by heart,
streets memorised from programs and dreams.
Red curtains bloom inside her mind.
whenever music lifts and swells.

She studies lyrics and lines like secret spells,
believing words can change her world.
After school she runs to class,
Hair tied in a bun, jazz shoes ready in hand.

Teachers say she's young, there's time,
but her dreams do not wait politely.
Her feet are blistered, her knees bruised,
yet joy insists she tries once more.

She learns that failure is a teacher,

and auditions are doors, not walls.
At night she whispers 'thanks' to the stars,
for letting her dreams feel close enough.

At nearly thirteen, she is becoming,
stronger in breath, braver in heart,
One day a curtain will raise for her,
and her name will glow in lights.

She'll remember this small room,
and the girl who dares to dream,
The orchestra will swell like sunrise,
the stage warm beneath her feet.

Then every late night will make sense,
Every note, every try.
The West End waits beyond her days,
A promise written in her voice.

And every time she dares to sing,
the distance shortens just a little.
This girl is hope in dancing shoes,
already stepping towards the stage.

Lily Rose, Cardinal Langley Roman Catholic High School

Cake Face

I wanted it before I had a choice,
Before I learned I had a voice,
I watched my mum face the day,
Her mirror highlighting any stray

I started small – mascara, just a line,
Concealer dabbed where skin wasn't fine,
A tiny practice, a quiet start,
But I felt it growing in my heart

My freckles dimmed under foundation's sway,
Constellations erased in a careful way,
Each layer smooth, each mark contained,
Until I feel restrained

Now I'm thirteen,
I get told my hours of work could've just been suncream,
I get told my hours of work is tatt,
I get told my hours of work is for a boyfriend, when did I say
that?

I did it for me, not for their eyes,
Not for approval, not for lies,
But their words hit hard
And suddenly my pretty makeup wasn't a guard

Soon enough the makeup's touch,
All became something I needed too much,
Now everyday I brace and pace,
Waiting for comments on my "Cake face".

Ava, E-Act Royton and Crompton Academy

More Than Just a Braid

We Kurdish women are strong,
We have and will be sisters all along.
We stand side by side determined to stay,
And we don't mind standing there until we get our way.
We will stand strong in the face of war,
As we watch our old friends' bodies wash up on the shore.
You can't silence us no matter how hard you try,
Nothing can stop us, not even war's cry.
You cut our sister's braid off and for that we are torn,
Just remember, you can cut one braid, but we'll just braid a
thousand more.
We are like the branches on a tree, united and forever strong,
Although even the strongest tree in the forest can sometimes
feel like it doesn't belong.
But we are not just some ordinary tree, we are the Kurdish
sisterhood,
We wrap around each other in the shape of one strong braid,
made up of the very finest Kurdish wood.
The men may be leading the wars all day long,
But we're marching right behind them with our army of braids
singing a different song.
We will not give up, no matter what you do,
Because we're not ordinary women, we're Kurdish warriors too.
We Kurdish women can never be held back,
Especially not when our beloved Kurdistan is under attack.
We braid our hair to show respect for those who have died
before,
And that we Kurdish women will be held back no more.

Aween, Eggescliffe School

Typicality

Listen up world you're 'bout to hear my name.
Tick, tock, I'mma show you real change.
Glam and glitz yeah I got 'em all on my gold chain.
I'm gon' show you what I'm made of let 'em all go up in flames.
Only goin' up, up, thrashin' all the rain.
'Cause this is what you call real real fame.

I know it's my era, only I will domin-ATE
"Domino!" and you're 'bout to fall, check-MATE.

Sky turns red when I drop that beat.
You thought I'm weak;
But I shake the street.
No "Girl", no "Boss"; only real me.
All the wild in my veins crush 'em all beneath.
And even on this beat, I can't be tamed.

All eyes on me
Like I'm a celebrity
Pretty
Savage
Always on red carpet.

Everyone silent.
All on my entrance.

"I'm sorry, WHAT? How did you change/"
I'll tell you all my story; someone pass me my shades.

I know I got a few tricks up my sleeves yeah.
Get ready, you're 'bout to see my teaser.
Know I'm cold straight from the freezer.
Spotlight's on me, this stage ain't for your trailer.

Yeah I show 'em how we do it
I'll tell you how to do it
Now you know how to do it
Do it. Do it. Do it.

Thought I'm built like robots?
Know I'm built of diamonds.
Diamond worth for thrones;
I'm not the red-rose but the thorn.

Sky turns red when I drop that beat.
You thought I'm weak,
But I shake the street.
No "Girl", no "Boss"; only real me.
All the wild in my veins crush 'em all beneath.
And even on this beat, I can't be tamed.

I know I got the crown on my head.
True power ain't never gon' be afraid.
Guess all the bets are up on me
The show's just started don't need to leave.
Always on my mark, don't need no cues.
I'm "a girl" making history.

What do you call a Queen? Not the Queen of Mean.
Life's the real treasure. Go and conquer. No pressure.
If you wanna feel the pleasure.

Choirs of praises. La La La.
Singing my name with all that melody.
Welcome to my Kingdom. Only royalty.
Fallin' in my trap. Not your "typicality".

Thasina, Kingsmeadow Community School

Boys Don't Cry

Stereotypes can kill a man,
literally,
Just one judging eye can make them bottle it all up inside,
these sayings, like, "Boys don't cry,"
"Man up" and more it all makes you feel weak,
Like it doesn't matter, whatever you feel through the
week,
And you don't want to talk about it,
you really do try,
but you don't, because "boys don't cry"
these words stick in your head, like gum on a shoe,
Lodged in the back of your head, no matter what you do,
People only see what's outside,
The fake smile, fake confidence,
It's all messed up, it's not really you,
The fear of your eyes, judging you,
because of a word on your shoe,
so check your mate,
no matter how they look on the outside,
because it might be begging to be released,
because that monster will still feast,
bang, bang, banging against his chest,
yearning for that relief
because he might feel, deep down inside,
that he must bottle it up,
because boys don't cry.

Harrison, Manchester Community Academy

Victoria's Secret

Victoria's secret -
She sits there,
Perfect body,
Perfect angles,
Designing things meant to
Spotlight every inch
Of her perfection.
Skinny silhouettes on the runway,
Faces painted smooth,
Not too tanned,
Not too pale,
Straight white teeth
And a walk rehearsed
To look effortless.
Young girls watching,
Learning silently
What they are supposed to become -
A blueprint of bones
And beauty
That never truly existed
Because Victoria's secret
It was never hers at all.
Behind the lace
and glassy smiles
Stands a middle-aged man
deciding what 'beautiful' means.
projecting a reverie
onto young girls
to understand the price
a stereotype stitched into
fabric and skin,
sold to the world
as perfection.
when the real secret is

that none of it was real
and never was.

Sophia, Prenton High School for Girls

Existentialism (Philosophy in Reverse)

We exist,
and in every cosmos
philosophy, art, life
flourish into
meaninglessness, darkness,
cold.

Then,
“A fixed path of life,”
you think.

As much as you writhe,
the universe is indifferent.

The universe is indifferent.

As much as you writhe,
you think,
“A fixed path of life.”

Then,
meaningless, darkness, cold
flourish into
philosophy, art, life.

And,
in every cosmos,
we exist

Zak, South Hunsley School and Sixth Form College

Nostalgia

I miss the way evening felt,
When time moved slow and light was kind.
When laughter lingered on the shelf,
Every door was easy on the mind.

Old songs still hum on my chest,
Like radios left softly on.
They know the roads I loved the best,
And lead me where the days are gone.

Harry, St Hilda's Church of England High School

You Don't See Me

Yes, you are looking at me,
But you don't see me,
NO! you see the child you left behind,
The child who was left confused,
Questioning why?

Sometimes I wonder if you think about the house,
The house you left,
The home which is now filled with:
Love, laughter and life!
A home now filled with peace.

You give me a hug,
But it feels like holding onto a stranger.
Tense, Awkward, Unknown.
Like puzzle pieces in a box,
That will never fit together.

There is still part of me waiting,
Waiting for a text or a call,
But all I'm left with silence,
Until I visit the house that is no home,
The building that is not built of love.

The empty starts to get filled,
But its still not you.
It is never you, but my people,
The people who helped me through the dark,
Through the pain, through the struggles.

These people are the ones that stepped up,
We may not share the same blood.
But we are family.
They have done much more for me, than you ever will,

Like a pack of wolves, we help protect each other.

I never needed you!
I realise that now,
But I did want you.

Chloe, St Nicholas Catholic High School

Our Culture, My Life

They say Pakistanis are only tea-stained cups,
Thieving mothers that take on Eid, and aunties who talk too much,
But where's the real truth in that?

They think they know us from the news at night,
From broken truth hidden by lies,
They don't know we shed a tear,
When lies come near.

They spread rumours about weddings lasting a thousand days,
Only drums and endless noise praise,
But miss the vows made hand in hand,
Two hearts agreeing more than gold or land.

They say tradition means a rigid chain,
A cage of rules of pressure and pain,
They don't see tradition heals,
The sharp wounds that they make.

They've judged, alienated, and hurt us,
Even stated, 'go back to your country',
Like home is something packed and gone,
Their words are wrong.

Let them stare, let them talk, let them try,
We won't shrink down just to pass them by,
We'll wear our culture loud and proud,
Our accents strong, our English merging with Urdu language, our
heads unbowed.

This isn't about the lies they choose to spread,
It's about faith that teaches us to care,
About a culture built of love and prayer,
About our right to hope, to dream, to grow.

It's about coming together.

Samosas crisp like treasure in my hand,
Dates and sweets, the finest in land,
Steam from biriyani and fragrant golden cloud,
Every taste should and will make us proud.

In Ramadan, we fast, not just from food.
But from harsh words, from anger, from our mood,
We fast so we feel what it's like,
For others leading a struggling life.

Eid arrives, a sunrise in gold,
Stories of love and joy retold,
Laughter like fireworks painting the sky,
Hope like the stars that never say goodbye.

I love my culture; you should love yours too!

Alaya, E-ACT the Oldham Academy North

Two Sides of the Same Coin

Every coin has two sides
And every penny is almost weightless
From a single glance,
The first side is gleaming and polished
Seemingly unmarked
Perfect
The second side is rusty and tarnished
Turned away
Forgotten
The first side is fawned over and cherished
While the second is discarded as if it were worth nothing
Over time you may begin to forget the second side
Maybe it was never really there at all
But when the rain comes
The first side will be washed away
Forgotten just as the second was
And the coin left
Though old
Though damaged
Is the original coin
So don't choose the perfect coin
Choose the good one
As the perfect coin cannot always be perfect
But the good coin
The good coin will always be good.

Lucy, Weaverham High School

SOUTHEAST

KEY STAGE 2

The Ukrainian Boy

As I stand in the safety of my English classroom,
I feel sorrowful for my home, the Ukraine.
I am remembering my uncle and grandpa,
Who are bravely fighting so that one day, I will be free.

Dangerous, deafening, deadly bombs hit my city,
I hid, terrified in a shelter under my house.
Loud bangs rang in my ears,
Cuddled safely in my family's arms as my sister sobbed.

I felt like paper being blown in the wind,
Out of control and with anger for the enemy.
Happy to not be in the bombardment zone,
But feeling useless at not being able to do anything.

Sitting in the corner, feeling left behind,
My cousin had tears flowing like a waterfall.
I got a last hug and my favourite dinner from my grandma,
Before being sent like a letter to England to live.

Here I'm now, angry and confused.
Have I betrayed my country, not able to fight?
I'm Ukrainian, I'm proud to be,
But I'm scared and sad – I want to go home.

Ostap, Cold Harbour Church of England School

My Grandma

I am sad for my grandma,
Will she be ok?
I feel lost. Will she faint again?
Tears fall like rain pouring down my face.

Covered in wrinkles with brown eyes like mine,
Her mind works differently,
It's like an old machine, slowing down.
She's old-fashioned and stuck in time.

My once energetic 69-year-old grandma,
Used to like gardening with me.
She'd talk about her past,
And being born in Albania.

Now she forgets her children,
She even forgets her own name.
But she is my grandma and
In my mind is dancing and happy always.

Melina, Cold Harbour Church of England School

Tales by Moonlight

As the sun slowly set
A faint amber glow basked the green land
As mighty Iroko trees swayed where they stood
A flickering fire was set ablaze
The firewood burned bright causing a thick haze.

The children gathered eagerly, under a palm tree
To hear the wise old woman tell her tale.
They all sat waiting patiently on a mat
Waiting for her arrival.

They all wondered,
What was today's story?
Would it be about a lion who emerged in victory?
Or a scheming turtle who tricked birds heartlessly?

As the night drew closer,
They waited anticipating impatiently
The clock rang 7, 7:30, then 8
But the old woman was nowhere to be found.

Where was she?
Their little minds pondered,
Wondered and wondered.
She would come... wouldn't she?

One by one the children left with heavy hearts.
It was getting late,
But the wise old woman was nowhere to be found,
Not a trace...

Chikamara, Great Ouse Primary Academy

Dyslexic

Mouth open, mind blown,
sitting in a chair all alone.
Scared, lost and confused
what have I turned into?
I pick up a book, trying to read
but all words are so fuzzy!
Trying to spell, but nothing is coming
and the words don't seem to be flowing.
So confused; what should I do, what should I do?
The truth is sinking in.
The tears are running down my cheek
because I'm dyslexic.
A whirlwind of emotions spinning in my head,
tangled up all inside because
my whole world's been turned like the tide.
My handwriting scruffy
and theirs is perfection.
So confused; what should I do what should I do?
People say they understand
but it's **m**y brain only **I** understand.
Two best friends who read write and spell to Perfection
then there's me.
I'm laughing and playing I'm still having fun
cause there's no limits for anyone.
Nothing's changed really,
'cause I'm still me.

I'm not confused I know what to do,
laugh and have fun and shine like I'm supposed to!

Erin, Holy Trinity Church of England (Aided) School

Growing Quietly

I used to run without thinking,
knees scraped, pockets full of rocks,
the world laughing loud spreading cheer.
No clock telling me to hurry.

My toys still sit in the corner
waiting for me to take notice but
I don't reach for them anymore even though I am taller
than yesterday

My shoes feel smaller and my thoughts feel heavier
stacked with worries that I don't remember
asking for.

I miss when fun was easy,
when tomorrow felt ages away
when my biggest problem was
what game to play.

Growing up is quiet.
Not all at once, not loud,
just a small goodbye to parts of me I loved.

And sometimes I wish
I could knock on childhood's door,
to ask, just once more,
to let me stay a little longer.

Shynavie, Lent Rise School

My Life

My life is a shark,
Swimming through the deep blue,
Not knowing what will happen next.

My life is a road,
Winding across the country,
Roaming free over the world.

My life is a tree,
Fighting the wind,
Trying to survive the storm.

My life is myself,
Existing in a cruel world,
Climate change affecting me.

My life is a star,
Alone in the universe,
Exploding with a BOOM.

My life is a poem,
Fun and free,
People editing me all the time.

My life is a bird,
Uncaged and animated,
Soaring through the vibrant sky.

Erica, Moorlands CofE Primary Academy

Different

I'm in this world of people,
But I am still feeling alone,
They say it will always work out fine,
But I guess you will never know.

I can't be persuaded,
Neither can I be thrown,
That certain people can be responsible
All on their own.
There're people who try to hurt me,
And People try to hurt my feelings,
But I am still breathing.

But at the end of the day,
I am still ok,
You are going to interfere with my life,
No way,
I am me,
I may be a little lonely,
But I am happy and inspired,
And by my little sister,
I am admired.

To anyone hearing this,
Please sit down,
And realise oh he's a nice kid,
I am going to help Kit out,
And to anyone who thinks I am doing something wrong,
By expressing my simulation of life through poetry,
By all means have a go at me,
But I could poetically say this aloud to a whole crowd if I have to.
You're welcome to affect my life
But others don't have to,
You're welcome to make fun of me,
Because that's you.

Kit, Ocklynge Junior School

The River's Story

I remember when life was pleasant.
I mirrored the gentle sapphire sky as if it was my twin,
When I snaked through the mountains,
I danced from dusk to dawn as if there was no tomorrow.
The fish were my children,
The lily pads my friends,
I tumbled through the meadows as if I had no end,
My skin was like an aquarium of joy.
My hair flowed through the countries,
I had tadpole nursery's embedded in my clothes,
My life was never ending.
I watched as blossoms bloomed,
I watched as snow came and animals went to sleep,
I was wild as the wind and happier than any man could
know.

Now that time has gone,
Factories expanded,
Brick by merciless brick,
It left me crushed and empty,
I was no longer whole,
I wished I could go back,
Those once joyful aquariums were now grave yards of
death.
My head spun of toxic fumes,
Those once joyful blossoms,
Where now withered and shrunken,
By the same treacheries as me.

Children, find me if you please,
I am your past,
I am your future,
I was your inheritance but now look at me,
I am now just your bin,

Why don't you care about our world?

I, who saw all,
I, who experienced it all,
I was near my end,
I am the only remain of the past,
Under the once stary sky is where I will die.

Ava, Sheredes Primary School

Lyra's Day Out

It all started when Poppy left Lyra's cage open to go to her school running race

She knew what to do, she had to do it, it was obvious, she had to go to brilliant outer space!

Her plan was to use her jet packs to blast off to Jupiter
She knew she needed her amazing asteroid poopotater

After flying for hours she finally got to the big gassy planet
and she couldn't believe how much it was covered in granite

But what surprised her the most was the horrendous smell of egg

Luckily she had remembered to bring her special nose peg

She fixed it to her nose between her soft hamster whiskers
And all of a sudden broke out in blisters!

Poppy, Slade Primary School

A Summer Evening

The sun's golden ribbons of light finish off their day of
glitter,
The last rays of day sparkle on streets paved with litter,
Tide comes in and waves plummet against towering rocks
Sunlight streams off gliding wings soaring across.

See the sky in shades of fire and crimson,
Bobbing on the waves, plastic pieces wrongfully glisten,
Up high, cotton-candy clouds are so delicately dancing,
When a graceful breeze dives in, entrancing.

Ripples of seawater inch up the damp shore,
Entering a world of greenhouse gases galore,
Sun-kissed sand grows dark and wet,
Watching the illuminating sunset.

Anaiya, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

Alzheimer's

I sit in a world in which my mind creates
A world which I can never escape
My condition grows on me, it takes and takes
A life which is no longer mine to dictate.

I get lost in memories which were once mine
Dreams and reality become intertwined
My mind is a void of successes and mistakes
Constant worry that I'll lose it, forget it and break.

At any moment, my world could come crashing down
Hurting the people I love, the family around
My condition is silent - yet it grows and grows
Whilst I relive a life in which I don't know.

Emily, Broadwater School

A Child's Nightmare

As I dozed off, I seem to feel uneasy,
I tossed and turned and became queasy.
Things around me like lights dancing.
I stared for a minute glancing.
The strangest thing appeared -
A woman or maybe a man with a beard.
It was unclear, but it must have had a meaning,
But all I could think about was how the lights were
gleaming.
There must be an escape,
Or maybe I have just made a mistake.
I felt wind brush past my face,
And my heart began to race
Surely, this is unusual,
But I thought it was crucial.
The things that spawned around me
Others would have thought it unearthly,
But I could only focus on one thing at a time.
How could this dream be mine?
Suddenly, I began falling
Into the distance and heard calling.
I woke up in a frantic sweat,
Hoping to find the person I had met.

Korey, Cecil Jones Academy

The Uncertainty

I'm young so I want to learn about my feelings,
About my emotions and tribulations that I've been having
since I was teething,
About the way the world works and how it will be working,
About my future and my past and all of the occurring,

But I'm older and still don't understand
What my place is in this land.
If I'm truly meant to walk or to talk or just to be bland
So I'm told to look in the mirror - "Try that!"

But all I see are the remnants of a soul that isn't whole, left
uncontrolled;
No one has the key to this keyhole.
So my frustration becomes fury and my fury becomes a
wave
A wave of... I don't know what, maybe joy, maybe pain

Maybe I'm not the only one with insecurities
Celebrities have tons of problems as well as money
They ask for "Respect" and "Say Little Prayers"
But no matter what they'll still be "Under Pressure"

"All that she wants" is a place to "Dream On"
"Life Could Be a Dream" but "Here Came the Sun"
All that they need are their own "Private Idahos"
It's safe to say that their "Dog Days Aren't Over"

I don't mean to blab but I guess I'm still reeling
From the sheer lack of understanding of my feelings,
But I'm still young and I'm still learning about these
emotions, problems and anxieties!

I'm beginning to find that shouting at a wall

Is not really working like I thought it would at all,
Because the silence that follows makes my skin crawl.
The truth is, I'd prefer if someone were there to stop my
fall.

So, I go and talk to the people around me:
My kith and kin, my friends and family.
They talk about my feelings, relate to my anxieties.
"Channel your bravery, don't fear the casualties."

My loved ones are always there to help me see the security
and the safety,
the love and the beauty.
And though I can't always get away from the worries,
I'm glad to say I've accepted the uncertainty.

Neria, Chatham Grammar

The Weight of Salt Water

Even on the brightest days,
Where the sun drips honey across the horizon,
The water holds its dark haze,
That no golden rays can brighten.

Serrated waves encage me,
A prisoner of the deep blue.
No way to ever flee,
No sign to ever be rescued.

And for some reason I can't name,
I don't claw for escape,
I just lay there. Still,
Whilst it pulls me down,
Further than you can imagine.

I lay still on cold ocean floor,
Quiet in the dark until found,
And beached like driftwood,
Spat back to the shore.

Violet, Fullbrook School

A Hearing Loss

A hearing loss,
They call it mild.
They say 'it could be worse' - but they don't wake up in my
body,
Ears ringing like sirens,
Heart already tired before the day begins.

A hearing loss,
And every morning starts with silence.
Not peaceful silence - the heavy kind.
The kind that reminds me that the world will always be one
step louder than me.

I reach for my hearing aids.
Cold plastic between my fingers; my link to the noise; my
armour against isolation.
And for a few seconds, the world floods in.
Too much, too sharp, too loud to love - but too quiet to live
without.

A hearing loss means endless appointments.
Microsuction, Molds.
'the usual' they ask.
I smile, 'pink with extra glitter' - because if I have to wear
something to hear,
Then it's gonna sparkle even if my heart doesn't.

A hearing loss.
Means my brother turning on the fire alarm to get my
attention.
Means growing up to read lips and not stories.
Means learning to sign before learning to sing.
Means teachers saying, 'she's fine, she's well behaved'

But what they really meant was, 'she doesn't make noise about her pain'

A hearing loss,
Means people assuming I have it easy - 'you're not deaf deaf'
As if there's a chart for how much understanding I deserve.
As if being 'not deaf enough' makes me lucky.
Instead of lonely.

Its ear bleeds and burst ear drums,
Ear infections that ache through the night,
It's doctors calling it manageable,
But they don't see me pressing my pillow tighter just to drown the phantom ringing.

It's endless. It's lonely. And still - I get up.
I put in my hearing aids - I paint my lips the colour of confidence.
And step into a world that never really hears me.

My normal is someone's 'once in a lifetime pain'
And I carry it like its glitter.
Shining. Heavy. Beautiful.
And mine.

Lucy, Maritime Academy

Everything Unsaid

How can I be the one to choose what to write?
I mean look at the world
from left to right
There's so much to say
But no right way
Not enough time to plan
Or to make sure my message will actually land

I mean come on
Children are bombed
And people get wronged
For our race and our face
Aren't we all the same creatures just floating in space?

What is this age? And where's the punchline?
I'm tired of this page
And the same old rhyme

It's been time for a change
We've passed that stage

And won't you put down that phone?
You've got debts to pay
Didn't you know?
You were born a loan

And why should I be bothered to write?
When all the good things are so out of sight?

It's not my fault you chose money over time
It's not my fault you chose the wrong side
It's not my fault you've filled my lungs with carbon dioxide

I'm 14
Your 40

I'm too young to be fighting your battles
Too young to already know how to saddle

It's not my fault
We're not to blame
And we certainly aren't animals that can just be tamed
We're more than...

Wait

I just got a text

Andrea, Parmiter's School

When the World Goes Quiet

When the world goes quiet, you can finally hear it,
The thin trembling thread that ties your heart,
To every moment you thought you'd forgotten.
It hums softly beneath the noise of the living.
A reminder,
That even the smallest parts of us are trying their best
Not to disappear.
We grow up learning how to fix broken things.
Plates, promises, the edges of ourselves.
But no one teaches us how to hold something fragile
without fearing the weight of it.
Some days,
We are oceans rising.
Saltwater and certainty.
Other days,
We are barely a ripple.
Hoping the shore still remembers our name.
We hide our questions in the folds of our sleeves,
We bury our doubts between breaths.
We carry our wounds like invisible lanterns,
Glowing,
Even when we pretend we're fine.
And still,
Still.
We rise.
Not like heroes,
Not like saints.
But like people who learned to stay alive.
In a world that doesn't pause.

For anyone.
There is beauty in the bending.
There is power in the inhale before the sob.
The trembling hand that reaches out anyway,
The voice that cracks.
But continues.
Listen,
You don't need to be whole to be worthy.
You don't need to be fearless to be strong,
You don't need applause to show that you mattered.
Though you deserve it more than you know.
Because the truth is this:
Every one of us is a small act of courage wrapped in skin.
Every heartbeat is a rebellion,
Every breath is proof that even in silence,
We continue.
And maybe that is the loudest thing of all.
The quiet, steady insistence that we are still here,
Still trying,
Still rising.
From every moment that tried to break us.
So, when the world goes quiet,
Stand tall.
Let the air carry your name,
Let your presence ring like a bell.
You are not an echo,
You are the sound the world leans in to hear.

Chloe, St Edmund's Catholic School

Untitled

I watch the city grow,
And I watch the city shrink,
No one there, I do know,
Because for me, their lifetime is a blink,
People hustle, and move, and work,
And in the shadows some do lurk,
One day a beauty never seen before,
A beauty from our own earth's core,
But it was destructive and left a trail of death,
An entire civilisation wiped out in a single breath,
Yes, I saw this all and more,
Because beauty is life, best served raw,
This lava came out like a fountain,
And I saw this all, because I was that mountain.

Finn, The Bishop's Stortford High School

Small

Nobody prepares you for the feeling of growing up,
It's ups and downs, the excitement and fear,
But I miss the days when I didn't have to worry,
About studying, how I looked, my grades.
How do I know if I'm doing what's right?
I think about it every night,
It just feels like I'm guessing along the way,
I worry about it nearly everyday,
Everyone else seems so okay with it.

I wish I never took the limited time I had for granted.
I miss the giggling, laughing, being dirty after a day out at
the park
Looking back, I had everything I wanted
I wanted to grow up, I saw it as freedom, like a bird free
from its cage
Looking back, I wish I never had

I look at the same house I grew up in,
Where I placed my back against the wall
Where I marked my height on the doorframe
I stood on my tip toes
I would do anything to go back to being small again.

I look at my room, where's my rainbow rug and my pink
walls?
I mourn my childhood bedroom that I haven't touched in
years
Dust settles on the picture frames of my family, it's not like
how it used to be
Where the walls close in like they're tired of holding my
childhood memories
The stuffed animals on the shelves now look more like
strangers than friends.

I want to fall hard without being judged again.
Call home for my mum again
Ask the school nurse for a plaster
And bottle my pride.

I feel much too tall again.
My figure too broad again.
Pull my knees to my chest.
I can't fold myself into the shape I used to be
I want to be small again.

Maya, The Reach Free School

Nerd

Nerd—a person who is enthusiastic in their particular subject.

Who is different beyond their control

Who requires repetitive routines throughout their day

Who misses tiny actions and becomes instantly weird

Who aches, wishes, longs for the courage to be themselves

Who wonders endlessly about how others see them

Who longs to escape the anxiety

Who feels the constant watch of authority

Who is safe with no-one else of their age

Who is a constant inhabitant of the library

Nerd—who is me...

Eloise, Weald of Kent Grammar School

SOUTHWEST

KEY STAGE 2

Stolen Nature

Stop running and hiding,
You are lying,
It's your future you are denying.

Through broken branches once filled with emerald leaves,
Stolen nature we are the thieves,
Mother Nature, we are deceiving.

Stop running and hiding,
You are dying,
It's your future you are denying.

Orla, Ashton Gate Primary School

Seaside

Trickle, trickle, trickle smash, crash and roar
I love the estuary and everything more
The way the fish move, the way the turtles groove, I love the
river, don't you?
The colourful coral down below and the white seagulls up
high
Everything there makes me want to sigh
The fishermen whistling in their docks and the birds singing
in their flocks
All the fish bobbing away until the end of the day
The seaweed clinging onto the rocks until they release their
green long locks
When I feel down, I go to the ocean to watch the waves play
where they gently wash my worries away
The smell of fish and chips at the end of the day makes my
tummy soar and I quickly run back up to shore.

Esmee, Combe Down CofE Primary School

The Depths of the Blue

A story begins on the ocean with wind and rain,
With waves crashing like a hurricane.
Thunder and lightning roared and raged through the night,
Without a single human being in sight.
All there was, was a single cargo ship,
Sinking down in the ocean depth.
Down. Down. Down.
Until it was out of sight,
And only thunder to bring you light.

Bea, Combe Down CofE Primary School

Being a Spy

If you're a spy you have to have a keen eye.
If you're a spy you have to have a plot.
I went to a restaurant, and they had glop.
"glooplesnop" said a dog and then there was a mlog.
"Mongkey, donkey" said a child and the spy ran wild.
If you're a spy,
If you're a spy,
You should always have a keen eye.

Toby, Combe Down CofE Primary School

Secrets

I'm sitting in a secret,
A world of mystery,
I'm sitting in a secret,
With no one next to me.
I'm sitting in a secret,
That I'm not allowed to tell,
I'm sitting in a secret,
I think I'm doing well.
I'm sitting in a secret,
Trying not to spill the tea,
I'm sitting in a secret,
Will you sit with me?

Etty, Combe Down CofE Primary School

Broken Thread

They made the stars glow, in one silent room,
They kept the secrets from outside gloom.

They kept on talking, from morning to noon,
They didn't care if something bothered them,
They fought through together until soon...

Each of them was a shining star until,
The great thread suddenly ripped,
With friendship rivals of pure doom.

But thankfully the great thread came back through...
With a gentle little smile, followed by a hug.

So, friendships are important for everyone,
Even me and you.

Lara, Lainesmead Primary School

Eyes

The place where you teach me,
feels like a truthful home
and every time I step on it,
I hear the blades rushing on the ice alone

And without further hesitation,
I try to do my best again
and in one second, in one click,
I do it better than before

I look into your eyes,
they're brown and green
I look further into them,
and see what they have seen

It's the future, past or present
and it feels like it's a gift,
You have your life and family,
yet you guide me through the storms

I always trust you, I always know
That you lead me through,
That you will help me 'til the end
And that your help will never end.

Nadezda, Ludlow Junior School

My Voice

Sometimes I wish,
I could fly away like a bird.
This is my voice,
So let it be heard.

It's sometimes ignored,
Pushed down and away.
Nobody listens,
And I don't get a say.

You can call it whatever,
Strange or absurd.
But this is my voice,
So let it be heard.

I often wish,
I could escape and be free.
But I can't do it,
Because I'm just me.

My existence is never put,
First, second or third.
This is my voice,
So let it be heard.

Saffron, Ludlow Junior School

Goodbye Winter

Winter reminds me of the cold touch of ice-cream
But I won't have that now spring is coming

Winter reminds me of warm hot chocolate going down my
throat
But I won't have that now because spring is coming

Winter reminds me of long, velvety black nights,
But I won't have that now spring is coming.

Winter is the cosiest season because festive lights go up,
Mince pies are made
And you can watch festive movies.
I only have one thing to say and that is
Goodbye Winter

Jacob, Two Mile Hill Primary School

I Am a Memory

I am a memory,
A fragment of truth,
What was and now isn't,
A forgotten youth.

I am what's precious,
Sometimes despised,
I can be vivid,
Or speak nothing but lies.

I've broken hearts,
And left grievors to rot,
But I can still salvage,
What the present cannot.

I'm taken for granted,
'Til you need me most,
Because I shan't thrive,
Where sanity cannot cope.

But on the day of your death,
When you plead for me back,
You cannot remember,
What in life you did lack.

For I am a memory,
A fragment of truth,
What was and now isn't,
A forgotten youth.

Loretta, Woodbury Church of England Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

I Have a Dream

I walk through a world stitched in shadows.
Where the wind hums the names of the forgotten.
Ash clings to the stones like a memory that will not fade.
The air tastes of silence – heavy, unbroken.
Children sleep in doorways of vanished tomorrows...
Their dreams dimmed to embers.
Even the stars seem to turn their faces,
as if the night itself has grown tired of watching.
But I have a dream.
I have a dream of hands unafraid to reach,
of voices that no longer crack under fear.
I have a dream of lanterns carried through the dark,
Their trembling flames daring the void to swallow them.
I have a dream where sorrow dissolves like salt in the sea –
And every heart learns the shape of its own light.
I have a dream where love is not whispered but sung –
Loud enough.
And in that dream – the world remembers how to breathe.
Roots thread through cracked pavement,
carrying blossoms in their arms.
Bridges arc like open arms across once-empty rivers.
Laughter spills from windows that once held silence.
The ground remembers how to bloom.
Eyes meet without flinching.
Wounds knit themselves closed –
while the air fills with the hush of wings.
And the stars – the stars remember us.
They lean closer, their light spilling through our broken
seams...
Crowning our shadows with dawn.
I have a dream –
and tonight, the heavens dare to dream it too.

Patricia, Bodmin College

Our Situation

In our current situation
There's gonna be no more inflation
And for your information
We'll not even have any migration

We also won't stop with deforestation
So we're not gonna have a breathing station
No one seems to have had that realisation
And that's only part of my explanation

I think the world is gonna make a dent
And it's gonna be so big you couldn't repent
On guns and missiles moneys been spent
Soldiers in armour the countries have sent

ICE has struck
And without much luck
Someone's been killed just like a poor duck
Once beautiful fields have been reduced to muck

The world is in trouble
Russia's tryna double
England's in a little bubble
We'll reduce the world to rubble

This all is connected and once we're affected
No one's gonna be re-elected
Nothing to be collected
Just death, sorrow No more tomorrow
Bodies lying in a row and everyone buried with woe
No more fun
No more time to run
We'll all be undone
Not even a pun

So no more jokes
No more games
It's time to be serious or we'll all be sent to the grave

I just want a quiet life
Without war death or even strife
It's painful to watch like being stabbed with a knife
So I'm gonna enter this competition while I'm in life
So if your reading this I would be so excited
Please go ahead and make me delighted
Just hear my words and listen to me
For all of us are under the same tree

Otis, Cotham School

The Jar of Life

The jar is your life it starts off empty
Then comes memories you have 10 then 20

The memories are small, they are but grains of sand
They pour in the jar, and there they stand

You keep learning new things every hour every day
These teachings stick with you and never go away

The knowledge is the water it helps keep everything afloat
It flows into the jar making the sand look like boats

You begin to develop the most important things
Family, health and other vitalities they bring

The relationships you build are the huge rocks, the base
But you can't fit them in the jar, it's full, there's no space

You filled it up too full and in the wrong way
Now you have to redo it and hope everything stays

The big rocks go in first because they help you survive
Next is the sand because memories keep you alive

Finally the water because you would not be yourself
If you didn't have the knowledge that supports your health

Make sure you put the most important things first
If you don't, then one day your jar might just burst.

Suki, Cotham School

Meltem

Oh how the ocean breeze
Swept through me mid July
Flutters the corner of my sleeve
And my black velvet hair

If you ever get lost
Just move seaward
Where moon kissed the ocean
I will always be there

Like a message in a bottle
Floating in the marmoris
Longing for a response

If you tell the ocean
What worries you
It will listen silently

If you cry
Your tears will fall
And the ocean will know
And the ocean will wait
Wait until you pour your heart out
Then you will hear
A breathtaking melody
As it hums and chimes with the soft wind

Oh the sweet summer breeze
That brushed against my sunkissed cheeks

Oh to look into your eyes
And to realise
How similar it is to the glistening surface
Both were like mirrors

Like mirrors
But clearer
As they reflect the lies
The truths
They reflect the feelings
One has for another

Oh to crouch down
Barefooted
Searching for the shiniest seashell
Building the tallest sandcastle

Oh how that ocean breeze
Swept through me mid July

Linh, Cotham School

Poetry of a Long-Lost Soul

From my mind, twisted verses ebb, my thoughts woven into
cursed webs,
Dark and cold, entangled threads, poetry lies in the beauty
of words unsaid,

The way the golden twilight glows on the corner of a stone,
Soft rushing of wind, my tormented spirit is home,
Strands of gold mask my face,
The hells of my head are such a foul place,

Dark feathered creatures drop from the sky,
To peck at the foot trails of past passers-by,
The warm, glimmering dew-drops, that shine on the grass,
Soon turn to icicles, as many seasons pass,

Decades spent on Da Vinci and Mozart,
And I remember centuries ago,
When mine and others' hearts,
were as pure as fresh, white snow,

Gravel crunches softly, on this dreary path I am forced to
walk,
Never seeing a direction sign, when I come to a sudden
fork,

One side glows golden, and echoes with light,
The other is blackened like tar, or a dark winter's night,
I cannot decide which road to follow, or who to be,
When I spot a third path, between both of these,

This path is narrow, and laden with trees, the only thing
there is grey sky, it seems,
To find myself slowly walking it is as strange as a dream, no
clouds for shadow, yet no sunlight to beam,

Under a black waistcoat, my clockwork heart ticks,
For I always knew, a broken soul, was something I'd never
fix,

Whatever did I find there, is a mystery to you and me,
For only my own pathway is lined with old oak trees,
Yours may be brighter, or maybe it will not,
For knowledge of others' minds, is something we haven't
got.

Alice, Cranbourne School

Within These Racing Lines

A silver arrow, sleek and bold and bright,
Awakens to the sun, a fiery gleam.
A rumbling heart, preparing for the fight,
A waking giant, living out a dream.

The track awaits, a ribbon gray and long,
Where rubber sings and engines start to roar.
A symphony of power, fierce and strong,
A battle waged on asphalt, to explore.

Each corner sharp, a test of skill and nerve,
A dance of speed, a calculated grace.
Where victory waits, for those who will observe,
And push the limits of this thrilling race.

The crowd erupts, a wave of sound and light,
As drivers push, with all their strength and might.
Flags are raised, as tension cuts the air,
Each breath is held in hope, belief, and prayer.

The checkered flag, a welcome, final sign,
A moment captured, etched in history's hold.
A victor crowned, beneath the sun's decline,
A story whispered, brave and true and bold.

But more than speed, and engines' mighty call,
Is teamwork forged, and spirits intertwined.
A brotherhood that rises, should one fall,
A shared ambition, for all humankind.

The pit stop crew, a flurry in the shade,
Each movement quick, a ballet to be seen.
Where precious seconds, carefully are made,
To keep the dream, eternally serene.

The spray of champagne, laughter fills the air,
A celebration of a victory rare.

The echoes fade, the circuit now is still,
But memories linger, of the day's display.
A passion burns, upon the lonely hill,
Anticipating when they come to play.

The sun descends, a gentle, golden hue,
Painting the sky with colours soft and deep.
A promise whispers, of adventures new,
While engines slumber, and the world's asleep.

And in the quiet, one truth brightly shines,
The spirit lives, within these racing lines.

Beth, Five Acres High School

Shape of Freedom

They call us butterflies because we are easy to admire from a distance. Pretty things are safer when they do not speak. We are allowed the wind – enough freedom to flutter, to dance in the air, to believe we are free. But never enough to disappear. Hands reach out – not to protect but to possess. Fingers close around wings and call love, call it history, call it the way things have always been. They say we are fragile after teaching us to break. Time moves forward centuries even, but the cage learns new names. We fly in circles, carried by the wind yet never far enough to escape it. But butterflies were never made to be held. We were given the sky in measured doses, taught to call it freedom. But it does not matter- we persevere, we move forward, because we have to. Because there was never another choice.

Zofia, Glenmoor Academy

The Nice Patterns on my Shoes

I may look down when I play a game and lose,
But I am not sad,
I am simply looking at the nice patterns on my shoes.

The other day my friend said to me,
“Why are you so sad?”
I answered, “Why, it’s obvious to see,
I am not sad, I *am* looking down,
But not because I did lose,
Because I am looking at the nice patterns on my shoes.”

“Ok,” she says and walked away,
But I had no doubt in my mind
The same would happen again
The very next day.

Clara, Penair School

Wrinkles

You clamber towards me,
On four little questions,
Observing me as a puzzled little shoe.
You are a funny furrowed face to see
When I am turning in for the night.

There is a dip in your head,
Where, toad, I only want to place a jewel,
Complementing your looks.
You are too fragile to be merely toad,
A mathematical shape of perfection.

Your face drips into a frown,
Far too early,
Your eyes are split- yellow framing black,
You are a lump. A peaceful shrump, under my doorway.
A tiny gem-green lantern.

You shine like a star,
Radiance in a cruel world.
Even to me you seem so placid,
When I am a whisper in this heavy life.
But you are a gift, wrapped in wrinkles.
Toad.

Emma, Taunton Preparatory School

Want, Need, and Remember

My “Want” is impossible,
Everyone knows that.
I want to see my Papa again,
So the world doesn’t seem so flat.

My “Need” is easy,
Though it doesn’t seem so.
I need to be more proud of myself,
So I don’t always seem so low.

My “Remember” is happy,
But it can also be sad.
It was with My Papa,
And it was one of the best days of my life!

My “want” is to see My Papa again,
What I “need” is more pride,
I will always “remember” that “Purple day”,
And he’ll always be there for the ride!

Hannah, The Bay Church of England School

WEST YORKSHIRE

KEY STAGE 2

My Country

My country is painful.
Full of dreadful news
Full of police sirens,
And enemies too.

Death is like a friend,
That never leaves you alone.
My city is a cage,
Once you enter, you're trapped.

So don't put your hopes high,
Because the reality will let you down.
And if you're going to walk,
You'll be walking to your doom.

One day you're friends with someone,
The other, you're visiting their grave.
My country isn't peaceful,
It's a survival game.

Abdalla, Alder Tree Primary Academy

India

Traffic is rapid
Air is humid

Nothing is pricey
The food is spicy

Taj Mahal and Goa
Jaipur and Kolkata

This is India
A vision of a utopia

Highest population
This is the ultimate destination

Bollywood and cricket
They love hitting the wicket

Yoga was made here
Now its fame is large and clear

This is India
A vision of a utopia

Lots of dialects
In the Ganges water people quietly reflect

Ghandi
Loved by you and I

Then there is Virat Kohli
Almost always wins a cricket trophy

This is India
A vision of a utopia

Zayyan, Allerton CofE Primary School

How the Leaf Feels

I am a leaf, not a magic one, just a normal, humble leaf.
Every day I watch people come and go wishing I could be there too.

Friendships form, new generations appear but I still stay here.

I might have seen you before, walking the streets or eating a picnic, playing with your friends, having the time of your life.

Meanwhile, I get pushed around by the wind and trodden on by humans.

My life is an embodiment of sadness, drowning in other people's freedom.

As the seasons carry on, and years keep on going, I continue to tear and suffer.

I've seen things you'll never see, been places you'll never go and yet as you pass by you refuse to hear my tales.

My daring adventures, overlooked by everyone.

How I wish to return to my branch, safe and comfortable, immune to the cruelty of life.

Jacob, Allerton CofE Primary School

The Test

I had a test on Saturday,
The nerves were following me about,
I took a teddy to scare them away,
That would be helpful, no doubt! But...

I was the only one who brought a cuddly,
A surprised boy said, "Why've you got that?"
They all turned around and laughed at me funnily,
As if I was wearing a silly hat.

It made me question; was I immature?
Did they think I was being a baby?
Was my toy NOT the nerve cure?
I don't know....maybe.

As the test was starting,
I hid the toy away,
Was this my childhood departing?
Or could I make it stay?

Then a girl passed me a letter,
It said, "I've got the same one at home."
It made me feel much better,
Now I knew I was not alone.

Once the test was over and done,
I went home: happy, glad and bright,
There's still time for play and toys and sun,
And when that's gone, I'll still be alright.

Esme, Burnley Road Academy

Sad Days

I know sadness dresses in black and blue
So, I write this poem here just for you
Sadness is like an ocean on a dark stormy night
It tricks you to thinking that no one understands you
That your whole world is sinking
But sadness is a visitor who goes to everyone
Past clouds of hurt in our hearts
However, you must go past the clouds
Until the sky is clear.

Thea, Hill Top Primary Academy

My Culture

Yorkshire is a place where there are very few,
It means more to me than it will ever mean to you
Roses may blossom bloom and grow
But this is my home and I will never go.

Jamaica is a place in the Caribbean
Bob Marley, sadly you'll never see him
The fried fish you will never beat that feeling underneath my
feet.
Jerk chicken or rice with peas
Carnival, a place where slaves became free.

Ghana oh Ghana where the weather is high
But I'll never leave their side, even if there are vines.
They stand loud and proud even when they are down
And they will always have a place in my heart and that place
will never drown.

Leilani, Horsforth Featherbank Primary School

Down the Road

When the street grows teeth,
When the night feels heavy,
and the breeze feels freezing
You are still here on earth,
Every lightning bolt tries to
 prove you are tiny,
But the lightning does not
 know how a star can be
 and how it says to you,
Even in the storm whispers
 “I am not finished yet”
You have walked through
Pitch black shadows that
Could’ve swallowed massive giants
 Yet you rise always,
 Again and again,
A little quiet skeleton wrapped in
 Soft, fragile skin,
So when you feel like you need a break do so,
Someday when you look back YOU will be proud.

Roksana, St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

Winter Days

Biting air
Winds blow
City streets
Under snow.

Noses red
Lips sore
Runny eyes
Hands raw.

Chimney smoke
Car crawls
Piled snow
On garden walls.

Slush in gutters
Ice in lanes
Frosty patterns
On window panes.

Morning call
Lift up head
Nipped by winter
Stay in bed.

Adonai, St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

Freedom

“What’s going on?” I said, while warm in bed,
sirens and bombs blare over-head,
guns in the distance, play an evil tune,
my Dad’s footsteps,
raced into my room

Fear plenty, possessions few,
out of my home and into a warzone,
death and destruction, our only view.

We explode down, the once familiar street,
now littered with rubble,
no more safety bubble,
it has been burst, by the pin of trouble.

Over walls and though dense forest we coursed.
Wet shoes and soggy socks,
finally, we arrived at the docks.

Smugglers making a profit from our desperation,
we hand our life savings,
to escape our once happy Nation.

Jam packed into a large metal box,
with what seemed like hundreds of others,
like being crammed into a football stadium,
united by hope, a band of brothers.

A strong sense of luck came into my mind,
our money gave us chances,
unlike the friends we had to leave behind.

Finally, we emerged
thirsty, hungry, blinded by the light,
I grip my mother's hand,
we had won the first round of this fight.

Walking away from the cargo,
we are liberated,
our skin, itchy and irritated,
"Where have we arrived?"
I do not know what will come after,
as me and my family ink the blank pages,
of our next chapter.

Louie, Weetwood Primary School

A Poem About Hope

Sometimes

It feels like the world's so empty,
Turning and spinning like a washing machine,
Inside out and upside down,
It feels like humankind is kinda stupid.
Wars we have no control over,
Men in expensive suits
So self-absorbed they've forgotten what's even human,
Recklessly throwing waste into the ocean
Like it's the Olympic Games,
Harming innocent animals.
It's all bad.

Until...

You see a cherry blossom,
Its bright colours shining in the spring sun
Or maybe the soft feel of your cat's fur,
So velvety and gentle
When she purrs next to you in your warm, snuggly bed.
Or the feeling you get when you see the vivid sunset on
holiday.

A sprinkle of hope glistens in everyone
Somewhere between all the hatred and wars,
And you know that everything will be ok
In the end.

Emmy, Weetwood Primary School

KEY STAGE 3

My Dream

My dream is to see you, for once I could truly
see you for who you are, what you are like,
everything about you.
But for now, this will do.
Your presence feels like a star,
shine so brightly yet you're so far.
You're my heart, keeping me going.
Your dark eyes are a toxic love song,
so, intoxicating yet I can't get away.
My mind is cluttered with my heart's desires
and one of them, is you.
Getting so close, yet we split away.
Oh, how I dream to see you one day.
So many chances, so little time,
I wish that you could be mine.
You put smiles on my face, without even doing a thing.
So, if you listened to my voice, maybe, you'll make the right
choice.
But maybe, just maybe, for now this will do...
and maybe, you were just,
A DREAM?.

Hubert, Bradford Forster Academy

Life's a Play

The audience takes a seat, flicking through their programs as the lights of the theatre go down.

The curtains open, and there I stand, centre stage.

And I act.

A different face everyday.

Matinee starts as I walk into school, and I step into the role of character A.

My characters don't have names, just a few defining traits - character A is just a normal girl in year nine.

But suddenly I see my friend walking towards me, and I pull on a different face - character D.

This character is louder, happier

With every person I see, every friend I talk to, I perform my one-woman show.

One person knows I hate a certain song, another doesn't even know my favourite singer.

There's room for slip ups of course - I tell the wrong joke to the wrong audience, or laugh at the wrong time.

But at the end of the show, the audience is more or less satisfied.

The curtains finally close when I lay down on my bed at the end of the day.

The audience stands for an ovation as I take a bow, they cheer loudly, and file out of the doors.

They all talk about me as they leave, smiling and glowing.

I'm left alone backstage.

Shakespeare once said; "all the worlds a stage"

Well, if that much is true, and I'm just playing a character,

Then who am I beyond my script?

Hanna, Brigshaw High School

What I Learnt to Carry

A smile doesn't always mean I'm happy.
Sometimes it's simply
what I offer in hallways,
what arrives before the words
I don't know how to say yet.
Silence doesn't mean I agree.
Sometimes it's how I hold my thoughts still,
how I choose care
over noise.
I've been called lucky,
even while moving through days
that stretched like night,
learning how to carry myself
without explanation.
And even if it still hurts today,
I trust that one day
I'll recognize how the pain
I carried quietly
shaped something steady in
me.
Not to harden me.
Not to break me.
But to teach me how to grow—
how what once overwhelmed me
became part of my footing.
Because life isn't only about breaking.
It's learning how to mend.

So, if I smile tomorrow,
let it be true.

Leen, Carlton Keighley

The Little Girl Who Did the Big Task

I stare at the wall, feeling alone
Lost, frightened, heart pounding,
Sweat dripping from my palms – I was stuck.

The classroom was silent, all listening to the teacher.
I was puzzled. My brain had left for France.

After break time, the moment came.

The spelling test, or for me, the obstacle course.

A few years later, I took an English test.
I was so worried but when I got home my parents also
looked worried.
Then I knew why – my English test.
Why can't I write, why can't I spell. My stupid brain, I can't
do it.

But the next week my parents said the words dyslexia test.
I thought 'great-another test for me to fail' but it was fun
and creative.

So I figured out I had dyslexia but it meant more than
struggling to write and read,
I could dance, I could act, I could sing, I could do the same
and more than anyone else
and more creatively because...

Dyslexia is not a disability, it's a different ability
I'm the girl who embraced it
And hopefully any struggling girl or boy can too.

Lucy, Carr Manor Community School

Sisters in Bloom

In the garden, where the tulips rise,
And watercolours paint the morning skies
Two sisters dance in sunlit grace.

The roses whisper soft and sweet,
A fragrance drifting at their feet,
As birds above in chorus sing,
Their melody a gift of spring.

The sky, a canvas warm and wide,
Beams down upon the Earth with pride,
Each petal's a touch, a promise true.

The sister's twirl with open hands,
Unspoken joy in shifting sands –
The weave through blossoms, heart as one,
A bond as endless as the sun.

Beneath their feet, the Earth awakened,
A quiet hum that softly shakened,
The branches high, the grasses tall,
And stirs the air with nature's call.

Alishba, Laisterdyke Leadership Academy

Dear Dad

The day you left us
The hardest day of all
Was the day I started wondering
How my life would start to fall
It was never really easy
As the sky dimmed with your goodbye
You lit it like a candle
Now I just look and cry

It was always in my mind at the front or at the back
If I could talk to you one more time
If we would laugh or would I crack
Your voice still echoes in quiet rooms
Like a song that never ends
And I would wish on all the stars
One more word one more time
That I could hear your voice again
And that all could be fine

Maybe one day we will meet again
Beyond the world beyond the pain
But until that day I'll keep you near
In every breath in every tear
I promise with everything in me
That I will be the best I can be
To keep your spirit near
And to overall give you a cheer

You meant so much to me
And it is hard to see you go
A love like yours is hard to find
So I'll just hold your memory just as mine

Eryn, Parkside School

System Cycle

Too young for shop-keepers, parents, strangers,
Yet too old for teachers.
Isn't that just crazy?
I had to grow up early – WE had to grow up early because of
these schools,
“Act like adults”
“Don't be like children”
Maybe we SHOULD be like children.
They were carefree, didn't have a care because well...
They didn't get told by school to grow up,
We are still children but told not to be,
Because of this system,
We have to be perfect,
Perfect because THEY want us too,
We have to be perfect, academically smart, masking our true
identities,
No room for creativity,
Only to get a “good job?”, to be successful in life with no
creativity?
Maybe some people don't want successful,
Maybe they want to be creative,
They should let creativity grow for all,
They should give help to all.
Iraizure, that's Japanese,
It means a mix of anger and sorrow,
Frustration at being powerless.
I am powerless,
WE are powerless,
We cannot escape this circular system that has stress and
working in it all the time!
Birth, school, work,
And what's at the end?
The only thing guaranteed in this life,
Is death.
We cannot escape this system but we can try to change it,
Encourage creativity,
Where many people thrive,

Where we can let people's bulbs light up,
Ideas spark in their heads.
Change this school system,
This life system,
And we can do this.

Saffah, St Bede's and St Joseph's Catholic College

Fear of Forgetting Poetry

I'm a poet,
Not because I can write,
Not because I own a notebook and some pens
Or because I collect the anthologies of the poets before
me
And the poets before them.
I'm a poet,
but not because others say I am
not because my English teachers say I'm 'talented'
and not because I'm asked to write poetry for those who
can't.
And if this is all that defines me as a poet
I chose to give up
I'll hand over my notebook and pen with a heart that's far
from heavy
Why would it be heavy when this is all I'm worth as a poet?
Why would it be heavy?
I'm not a poet.

I am not a poet,
Not when I let my soul become meaningless words on a
page that I've let other people grade.
Poets have not *Bled* and *Begged* decades for a voice
for me to strip the magic away from mine.
So with a heart of stone
I say..
I Am Not A Poet.

but I'm willing to try again
start from the top
because,

I Want to be a Poet Again.
I want my vessel of freedom to be me
a pen
a book
blood that spells beautiful words
words, that are authentically mine
words that separate poetry and **fear**,
fear that's tied to my chest,
fear like electrical wires covered in water waiting to shock
me,
fear of forgetting to love poetry.
It Chokes me.

I want to feel words take me far away from here,
I want to drown in the pages and float in freedom
because,
I Am A Poet
Written by myself
NOBODY else

Georgia, St Thomas à Becket Catholic Secondary School

Lock and Key

We learned love through glowing screens,
Through typing dots and disappearing acts,
Through “I miss you” sent at 2 am,
And deleted by morning.

We learned that silence can be louder,
Than slammed doors ever were.
Love used to be letters folded carefully,
Ink smudged by shaking hands.
Now it’s read receipts
And last seen time stamps,
Measuring devotion in minutes and replies.

We don’t ask, “how are you?”
We ask “why didn’t answer?”

In this generation, love is cautious,
It walks with its hands in its pockets.
Keys clenched like weapons,
Ready to leave at the first sign of danger.
We love like we’re rehearsing an exit,
Just in case staying hurts more.

Everyone is afraid of being honest too much.
Too caring.
Too attached.
Too honest.

So we pretend we don’t feel it, even when our hearts are
screaming.
We say, “I’m chill” while quietly drowning in unsent
messages.

Love is complicated when everyone is broken in different,
unspoken ways.
We carry past ghosts into new beds,
Old betrayals into fresh beginnings.
We punish people for crimes they haven't committed yet.
And still – we crave it – we crave someone who stays when
it's no longer exciting,
Someone who chooses us on the days when we're quiet
and heavy and tired.

But commitment feels like a risk in a world that glorifies
leaving.
We are the generation of the almost loved.
Almost forever,
Almost saying, "I love you"
But swallowing it like a secret because exposure feels like
losing.

Nikola, The Featherstone Academy

Joel

I have not met nor seen,
However, I know your name,
I can never truly know you,
Oh sweet little grave.

I stand at the edge,
Bringing gifts for different occasions,
Yet all for one reason,
Oh sweet little grave.

Counting holidays you never get to see,
Wishing you would be here with me,
I know you but you don't know me,
Oh sweet little grave.

At the end of the graveyard,
Gone yet never forgotten,
Missed, yet always loved,
Oh what a perfect sweet little grave.

Guy, Woodkirk Academy

The shortlisted young poets for the Young Poet Laureate Programme 2026 for each region (West Yorkshire, North, Midlands, London, Southeast and Southwest) are proud to present their anthology of original poetry. Together, these poems reflect the diverse experiences, hopes and imaginations of young people today.

Building on the success of the West Yorkshire Young Poet Laureate Programme, The National Literacy Trust and the National Poetry Centre partnered with the Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin and National Poet Laureate Simon Armitage to inspire the next generation of young poets across the country. This anthology is a testament to the creativity and hard work of everyone involved, especially the talented young poets who have shared their poems with us for this publication.



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