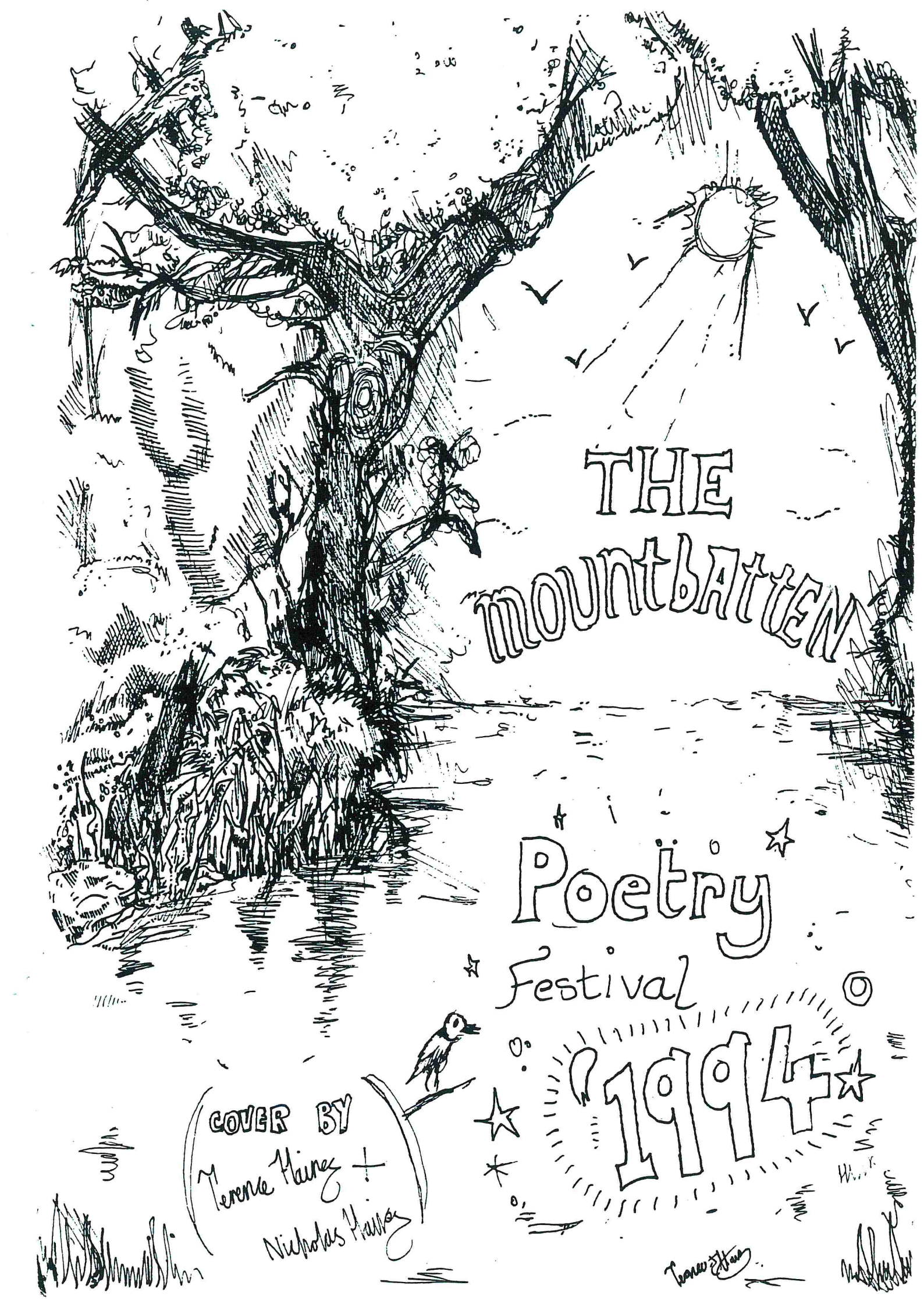
THE
mountbatten
Poetry
Festival
1994
COVER BY
Terence Haines +
Nicholas Haines

MOUNTBATTEN POETRY FESTIVAL 1994

It is always interesting to see what subjects fire the imagination, In 1994 it is hardly surprising that a number of poems dealt with death, bigotry, war, homelessness and man's inhumanity to man. But just as many reflected humour, affection, nature, and, most memorably, the power of words themselves.

I was very impressed by the skilful use of imagery to be found in many of the poems. In 'My Piano' the white and black keys are likened to brides and grooms, and the very apt use of the word 'harmony' is the last line ties the simile neatly together.

In 'Beast in My House' the image of fire as a destructive force is excellently sustained, as if the role of the firemen who came like knights of old:

> 'A torrent of water, straight as a sword,
> Shimmering silver,
> Struck at the heart of the beast.'

'First Steps' describes with love and surely first-hand knowledge, a toddler, and makes very effective and original use of metaphor:

> 'Silence as she draws a wave of breath to
> Wail her own ambulance siren.
> Seeking a mother's warm chest,
> When lifted up she knows her hospital is found.'

Or again, in 'War Zone':

> 'A vampire has sucked the blood of time itself
> And left behind only a dry carcass.'

Real feeling comes through in many of the poems. Who can doubt a genuine love of her horse after reading 'Peer Gynt' or the sorrow at the death of a friend in 'Now Her Living Has Gone'.

'Sunsets' might sound a rather well-worn theme, but not when it is described with such striking lines as:

> 'The hot colours splash the sky' or
> 'Night comes spreading her cloak.'

This sharp eye for detail is very well used in the description of a morning's fishing with his father and lifts 'fly fishing' into an experience you feel you have shared.

Lastly, humour in poetry is always welcome when it is deftly done. I enjoyed 'Saturday Results' with its counterpoint of announcer's voice and listener's comment. 'Dead of Night', 'Life from a Vampire's Point of View', was much enhanced by the use of metre and rhyme. And I couldn't resist the picture of 'The Business Man' lost without the help of his secretary.

I very much enjoyed reading the poems and congratulate Mountbatten School on the high standards they have achieved.

I Butler

Peer Gynt

Gliding, gracefully, smooth and sleek,
In sun, rain and snow,
Your eyes always shine,
Their warmth in the cold and cool in the sun.
Every pace falls like rain,
Like delicate fairy feet,
Like a carousel your dainty paces spread out equally.
Kindness is in your every breath,
Your tail is a flowing ribbon,
Your mane a running stream.
And every day of every week I am waiting,
Waiting for today to come,
As today is the day that I am mounted,
On that broad, safe, warm back,
And the way you move,
So beautifully.
Gliding, gracefully, smooth and sleek.

Charlotte Humphreys
7KZ

My Piano

My piano stands there so grand,
The shiny keys remind me,
of weddings,
The brides in white,
and the bridegrooms in black,
Holding hands together,
in perfect harmony.

Michelle Gay
7KG

People of the World

When I think of people I remember this;
Each brain inside each head,
is more powerful than the most complex computer.
All eyes watching, like colourful marbles,
Mouths like slices of melon.
Kind people, like soft chairs, nice to sit in.
Moody people, like hard chairs, uncomfortable to sit in.
Big, large people, like inflatable balls,
Old people, like owls, so wise, watching everything!
Young people, like fish, darting in and out.
I think of all this when I remember people. Do you?

Robert Clark
7KG

Evening

I'm sitting here tonight.
and the birds are all in flight.
The sky is clear and blue,
And the grass awaits the dew.
Everything is peaceful,
The trees are green and still,
Not a leaf is stirring,
As the moon climbs over the hill.
The baby birds are cheeping,
And a fox disturbs a bin.
As the evening darkens,
The bats will take to flight.
Twisting, weaving, searching,
Through the insect -laden night.

Helen Parker
7KG

Beast in my Home

I awoke to the high pitched bleep,
With eyes stinging and throat burning,
I saw with horror,
Black, thick smoke curling under my door,
Creeping up the walls
Like silent vapour from a horror film,
My door swung open,
I saw an angry beast
Gobbling up the stairs,
Orange tongues licking the walls.
The beast was getting near to my door,
Sweat was trickling down my face.
I felt the beast wanted me dead.
My whole house was being devoured.
Above the roar of the angry beast
I heard the wail of my rescuers
As they did battle with the beast.
A torrent of water straight as a sword,
Shimmering silver,
Struck at the heart of the beast,
Making it groan and hiss in anger,
Spit and claw for life,
Sinking and shrinking into itself,
Till only a small glow is left to melt.

Hannah David
8KQ

Feed at Night

In my coffin,
Still as night.
My hair silky black,
Face pure white.

Not daring
To face the day.
Waiting for night,
To seek my prey.

My hungry teeth
Transform to fangs.
My frame is rocked
From hunger pangs.

My furred black cape
Begins to flap,
Ready to entangle
A victim in my trap.

My pounding heart
Now turns to stone,
Waiting to find
Someone, alone.

I find a man
In a silent sleep.
My glistening teeth
Sink in deep.

His throat is red,
As red as Hell.
As I return
To my daylight cell.

Again I lay
In my coffin bed,
Waiting for tomorrow
To feast on more burning red.

Aimee Stewart
8WH

Sunsets

The sinking sun,
The ball of fire,
Dissolves behind the sleeping hills,
The hot colours splash the sky,
Even as they die,
Lying calmly on the tops of buildings,
Sleeping,
Resting.
Long shadows make trees look like Jack's bean-stalk,
Red clouds,
Pink clouds,
Orange clouds,
With hazy edges,
Wisps of them escape into the dark.
Night comes,
Spreading her cloak across the sky.

Amanda Weeks
8DJ

The Business Man

I am the man in the big, boss, chair,
I also have a long, long stare,
Phone rings, man comes in,
Throw that leaflet in the bin!

Photocopier on the blink,
Made me go rather pink,
My helpful typist went down with the 'flu,
Now I just don't know what to do!

Lost my tie,
Need to cry,
Split my coffee and my tea,
Why does it have to happen to me?!

Seth Amit Jethwa
8WK

WAR ZONE

Bleak and barren,
Cold and silent.
A castle stands upon a rock.
A coldness runs round its battlements.
A wailing, bitter wind.
The crumbling walls whisper,
Talking of days gone by.
Of voices which laughed,
And colours which glistened.
Once a realm of peace,
Is now a realm of discomfort.
Surrounded by black trees,
Branches never turn green.
A cursed land,
All hope gone.
A vampire has sucked the blood of time itself,
And left behind only a dry carcass.
Good times forgotten,
Bad times remain.
Negotiations broken down,
Nobody listens any more.
Only a bittersweet remembrance of time before.
Before what?
Before death?
Or a new beginning?
Knights who would once fight for love,
Now fight for hate.
A hatred inconceivable and dubious,
A once attractive land,
Now brutal.
The people have no control,
The beasts have the power.

Anna Gordon
9KZ

WORDS

Words;
Weaving together
Magic letters,
To create
A whole new world,
Waiting to be explored.

Words;
Dancing on a page
Combining.
With imagination,
Bringing new life
To old lines.

Words;
Sitting patiently
In an antique book,
Waiting for someone
To rediscover them,
As an archaeologist
Uncovers a lost tomb.

Lisa Whitfield
9KG

VIEWS OF LIFE

The motionless old man,
Slumps wearily in his chair,
He watches the flames flicker,
And lick the coal in the hearth with tired eyes.

His eyelids are heavy,
They gently drop,
And the world disappears from view,
After a long day....
He rests.

His face is old,
His mind is wise,
He is unfamiliar with the style of life today.

This man cannot remember the day,
Or the month,
Or the year,
Or when it stopped being good,
He went from a young lad,
To this.

To another name on the missing persons' list,
To someone who wasn't recognised in the world anymore,
To someone who had faded away.

Who is this man who sits before us?
Who are any of us?

Neil Nayaka
9KZ

SATURDAY RESULTS

Carling Premiership

Arsenal 3 Saints 0. Most of the Saints are over the hill.
Man United 2 Liverpool 2. The free kick from Giggs really flew.
Norwich 2 Aston Villa 3. The best team won it seems to me.
Sheffield Wednesday 4 Man City 0. The passing from Wednesday was totally brill.
Blackburn 2 Newcastle 2. An evenly matched game all the way through.
Leeds 1 Q.P.R. 3. The game was flowing like the deep blue sea.
West Ham 1 Coventry 4. The performance from West Ham was terribly poor.
Wimbledon 2 Ipswich 1. Fash's smash was like a bullet from a gun.
Tottenham 1 Everton 3. Beegree's skill was perfection to a tee.
Oldham 1 Chelsea none at the end of the match Oldham had won.
Sheffield United and Swindon play tonight I wonder if Swindon survive the relegation fight.

Scottish Division Three

Oh time to turn the tele off, thats enough for me.

Andrew Norgate
9DD

FIRST STEPS

Chubby little fingers grip the sofa,
As she hauls herself onto short fat legs.
Toothless smiles chew at every toy,
With sticky apple cheeks.
The toddler tumbles
Silence as she draws a wave of breath to
Wail her own ambulance siren.
Seeking a mother's warm chest,
When lifted up she knows her hospital is found.

Sumairah Syed
10WH

FLY-FISHING

When I was young
I used to watch my father casting aimlessly into the rippling water,
He used to try to teach me the motions;
10 o'clock 12 o'clock
10 o'clock 12 o'clock
He would count the rhythm,
He released after casting graciously from the banks,
The line would float gently down onto the surface film.

Occasionally a brace of pheasants would call
As they roosted in the curved oak,
Or flocks of geese would land in a delta formation on the lake.
He would draw the line in, inch by inch,
Until finally it hit the river bank.

"A new fly" he would exclaim, he would delve into his box,
Blue, pink, yellow, silver,
Fat, thin, eyes or not.
A huge array of multicoloured insects,
All declaring to be free.
A white fly has been chosen,
One with glamour and 'raz-mattaz'.
He would tie it on.

Tick, tock, tick, tock,
His arm moves back and forth in motion.
"The final cast and then we're away", he would call from the river bank.
He packed up his kit, lots of reels and flies.
"No fish today son", he would say,
Disappointment in his voice, "Oh well then".
And we would march back through the gorse thickets.
"UNLUCKY IN SOME WAYS, BUT VERY LUCKY IN OTHERS".

Mark Postill
10LF

WALKING

On and on over field and hill,
The trees in the wood and the flowers are still.
The snap of a twig as a heavy boot,
Tired from the journey lands down with a thud.
Every day for what feels like eternity,
Those boots of black leather, their step of certainty,
Have thundered by, come rain, come shine.
Along to West when the sun awakes,
And back to the East when the day is behind.

On and on over field and hill,
The trees in the wood and the flowers are still.
In Autumn when the golden leaves have fallen,
The noise of those heavy boots change in their tone,
From a dull thud to a crisp shuffling.
In Winter those boots crush the delicate frost;
The delicate carpet forever is lost.
No creature is safe in crossing their path;
Whatever its purpose, will not get very far.

On and on over field and hill,
The trees in the wood and the flowers are still.
Those days are long gone, but the story's the same;
The flowers are new, but the old trees remain.
As the months moved through seasons, the years have gone by,
Never to return, like the changing sky.
Those woods have seen changes: changes in role,
My father ceased walking, now I bear his sole;
To the West at each sunrise and back when it sets.

Helen Emma Stacey
10DJ

DEATH IS HERE

The morning air is still and clear.
A single lonesome bird up high,
`Let out a solitary call somewhere near.
Death is here.

The road is flat; no waving grass, to mournfully sigh.
A dismal stretch of black nothingness
Stretching out to the hairline of the sky.
Death is nigh.

The soft moan of a breeze - a ghostly scream,
The trees like twisted pleading fingers stretch far,
Reaching out to grasp the single flickering beam
Of moonlight, filtering down from the smothering blackness,
Blocking out the last hopeful star.

Catherine Smith
10WW

BENEATH THE TRADEMARKS OF OLD AGE

Beneath the trademarks of old age,
Youth remains within her mind,
And thrives there.
Her body forsaken by youth betrays her
As her gnarled decrepit frame
Repeatedly disobeys her command.
Pores, well worn creak with discontent,
And muscles strain like rusty springs inside her.
Like a ticking bomb,
Frustration mounts.
She shakes with sorrow.

Lissa Doyle
11KZ

NOW HER LIVING HAS GONE

My best friend
Died in a car crash
I saw her die.
I lied to myself that I could go on
Now her living has gone.

She died in my arms
I cried in her arms.
Consolation can't be found
In the flowers by her gravestone
Now her living has gone.

I tried to save her
WHY COULDN'T I SAVE HER LIFE?
I keep asking myself, stupid
I can't find her in my anger
Now her living has gone.

Friends who try to heal me
Tell me not to blame myself
But they don't know what it's like
Trying to carry on
Now her living has gone.

I've stopped believing these tears
Will wash the pain away
They only stain my broken hope
Because I cannot carry on
Now her living has gone.

Adam Richardson
11WW

THE TOMB

Here is a sacred life
Guarded by the unsurmountable gate of myth and legend
A person never quite knows, how high they have risen
A riddle,
A mysterious inscription,
These will be pondered over till the pondering becomes history,
How long,
Till all past is accounted for,
Like vagabonds scavenging on hands and knees for food,
Often to no end.
Men have a dream,
That every piece of information,
Every piece of evidence,
Will fit together,
Completing the tale,
Of this legendary sacred life.

Peter Freeman
11WW

IN IRELAND

I can't believe Jesus was human, like one of us
That one would sacrifice himself to death
But who would have thought,
Something so pure and clear
Could hate, burn, kill and shear
And yet be so angelic;
As white and innocent as a newborn child,
Would grow to cut like a knife,
Then melt away like butter,
Open your eyes and what do you see?
Man foolish with desire
for power, lust and money,
Streets and families once so close
Now laden with disease of authority
They may shoot to kill without a warning
At a glance, they may strike, then you're dead.
I want to play your pretty game
Of up she roars and down she falls
Dragging down yet more life.
Who would do this?
Only a holy yet deceitful god
What kind of prophet shoots, kills and steals?
We're going down, Mary,
Cry for me mother for thou art amongst women
We're going down.

Amy Plaisted
11KG

THE CARPENTER

For my Grandad

The man stands,
Hunched over the bench in front of him,
His brow furrowed with thought and concentration.

The wood in front of him lies listlessly,
Unshaped, Uncoloured,
Unrecognisable ...
Waiting to be formed.

He saws slowly and firmly.
The cold metal teeth sink into the wood.
The forming dust
is blown to the floor,
Before it has a chance to exist.

The room is full of scents and smells,
Like an oriental spice bazaar.
The floor, littered with sawdust, that
Smells fresh and new;
The varnish pot, leaking strange odours,
Across the room;
The hot smell of metal on wood,
And the smell of the perspiration from the man.

His rough hands sense the grain of the wood,
As it runs in curved paterns
Across the surface.

The plane, gliding along the wood,
Leaves a trail of golden curls behind.
The hands gently brush them away,
And they sink to the floor
Where they are crumpled to dust
Underfoot.

The hands grapsing the sandpaper
Rub slowly around the sides;
Ironing out creases,
And smoothing out wrinkles.

The man stands,
Patiently waiting,
As the varnish dries in the warm spring sunshine.

Patiently he stands,
Regarding his work with pride.
The soft colours seem to radiate
A soft warmth about the room.

He smiles.

Emma Williams
10DD

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MY MECHANIC MUM

My mechanic mum is cool,
Her belly is a microwave,
One leg is a cooker,
The other is an ice cold freezer.

Her brain is really clever,
She can do sums quick as can be,
She knows about nature,
Aeroplanes, cooking and culture.

Kate Skelton
7WK

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

THE FEATHER IN MY HAND

There's a bird in our garden
I saw it today
being very careful not to frighten it away.
It's not like Blackbird, Sparrow or Thrush
But more like a Parrot with a tail like a brush.
Mum said I imagined it.
Dad just coughed.
But our cat saw it and he just scoffed!
All that was left in the garden next day
was a feather that was just about to blow away.
I picked it up and soon I realised our cat had
eaten a fancy foreign breed.
The likes of which he would not taste again,
And now all that was left was the feather in my hand
and a memory of a bird from a foreign land.

Charlotte Hyde
7WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

GOING SOUTH OF THE PARK

They ran south of the park,
They shouted north of the shops.
They ran in the night and were not seen.
Their breath was the smell of smoke.
Tell the people we are bad,
We have run in the night and cannot be caught.
Police, how can we escape you?
They fought and were slain.

Matthew Ellis
7WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

SISTER ON SISTER

Will you help me tie up me shoelaces?
Will you help me on with me mittens?
Even though it is my turn, will YOU feed the kittens?
Mum says you have to do this,
Dad said don't do that,
I'll tell if you don't feed the kittens,
I'll hit you with my bat.
I'm a big girl now I am. I'll be bigger than you,
Give me just another few years and I'll be
bigger that you,
Give me just another few years and I'll be
bigger than Mum too.
Will you change Jessy's nappy?
Yes, I know she's just a doll.
She's my very bestest friend,
She doesn't like you at all.
Jo-Jo thinks she's real grown up,
in fact she's only three.
Shė passes on the harder jobs - usually to me.
I really hate my little sister, she's just a weeny piglet,
She tries to learn to knit with wool,
but all she does is fidget.
I really know much more than her,
She's just a few years younger.
She tries to lift up heavy weights,
but I am much more stronger.
My sister always thinks she's great, but I am almost eight.
I'll be better than my sister always, forever.
Even though we'll both grow up,
I'll always be most clever.

Hannah Meikle
8WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

THE ENVIRONMENT

In our endeavours to progress,
We often nature's realm distress.
In search of pow•Aer, coal and oil,
We scar the earth,
We tramp and spoil,
All that has taken time untold,
In nature's manner to unfold.

We sacrifice the ancient tomb,
To trace our race back to its womb.
Our needs to know exceeds all else,
Our greed for knowledge that leads to wealth,
Could we but see or just recall,
The wealth of life surrounds us all.

Lisa Newell
9DY

COMMENDED BY W .H. SMITH

THE LAST WAY OUT

They had always seemed so harmless,
But it had been horrid taking them:
Two in the morning and two more at night,
But any more and they'd have realised,
And I wanted no one to stop me,
Or maybe I did, maybe I'd wanted some one to say
"Hey! Don't do that, we do love you!"
Maybe that's why I hadn't taken them all at once,
But no one said anything and the last thing I heard,
Was my father saying just what he'd do, when he got his hands on me,
And I knew I had to take the last one and get away from him.

Karen Evans
9WH

COMMENDED BY W .H. SMITH

NIGHT CREATURE

You catch a glimpse if you are quick,
As it runs for shelter,
Scurrying between the bushes,
Its nose sniffing
the fresh wet soil,
Its little legs searching,
discarding leaves.
Its ears pricked up,
listening for danger,
ready to hide.
Its spiky coat,
A suit of armour.
As the world wakes up it retires to its home
of crackly leaves
and warm soft moss.
For another day of slumber.
Ready for another night of hunting.

Kate Snowsill
9WW

COMMENDED BY W .H. SMITH

THE LAKE

The Lake shut me off form the rest of the world,
The waterfall flooded back memories.
Trickling onto the water surface,
Making a memorable silhouette on the lake.

I remember the day as if yesterday,
Darkness was in the air, and that man.
I should have stopped him, as the waterfall fell,
Its noise not meaning anything to him.

I knew he was going to fall,
But somehow it was a shock to me when he did.
He dropped, a leaf cascading to the ground,
Falling to the rocks, dying instantly.

I don't know why I returned to the site, but I did.
The incident had drawn me back.
I was at the dying place of my father,
About to do the same thing he did.

I followed the same tracks he had made,
To the waterfall plunging to the ground.
I took a breath in, my last breath of fresh air.
And then I threw myself in.

I fell, my life rushing past me,
But already the ground had caught me up..
I lay on the rocks, my father beside me.
My life had ended, on the Peaceful Lake.

Neil Bush
9KZ

COMMENDED BY W .H. SMITH

THE SEA

All around the world there is sea
From the Caspian and Dead to the one at Galilee,
There is sea.
In all the great oceans there is life aquatic;
In all the high seas, even the Adriatic
There is life.
There are great coral reefs, prickly like gorse
And there are tiny sea creatures like the sea-horse.
There is life in the sea.
The wave-washed wastes of the bright yellow sand,
Go all wrinkled like a walnut, at the tide
and a boat leaves the land.
There are men in the sea.

There is a wind-blown skiff,
Hurled, like a tennis ball against the cliff,
There is disaster at sea.
The skiff fills with brine and slowly goes does,
The poor men struggle with the icy hands of death, then drown.
There is death on the sea.

Gavin Saunders
9LT

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

IRISH ORPHANS

You see them sobbing alongside the hearses,
Bewildered,
Vulnerable,
Unaware of their newly found titles,
Ignorant of the actual implications they bring,
You ask yorself,
What could these children possibly have done?
Or was it just another mindless killing
Like so many before.
All in the name of freedom.

Laura Stanley
9LF

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

SHOVELLING COAL

The spade slices through the pile,
Dust flies over his humping back,
As coal falls into the scales,
He wipes his black old brow,
till his skin is visible again.
The stench of coal dust mixes
with the humid summer sun,
The scales tip, they are full,
He lifts a dusty dirty black sack,
Coal falls, scraping the metal sides
of the scales, till all is gone.
He heaves the bulging black sack,
"Another one gone," he sighs,
Only fifteen to go.

James Alexander
10LF

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

CAR WASHING

A dirty car washed only a week ago.
It stands lifeless in the drive. Unaware.
My father gets ready; jumper, socks and all,
All the kit's worn just for the once weekly chore.
In his hands a bucket, sponge and leather.
The water's hot and bubbly ready to turn brown.
The job is taken as a ritual,
As his father did before him,
And I suppose I will in the future,
Every weekend, every week.

The car is attacked by sponge and water,
Doesn't squeal, wince of dodge,
Just sits there like a number on a list,
The turmoil over, the car is clean,
Then has to be dried before the wind does the job,
The job is done, he doesn't sit and rest.
He just carries on with the next job on the list.

Andrew Ferguson
10WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

FISHING

Calm misty morning,
Birds call in the trees,
Boat slowly bobbing,
Downstream in the breeze.

Float sitting patiently,
Warm beneath,
Trout hunting breakfast,
Snaps it in his teeth.

Line pulls tightly,
Reel screams aloud
Have I got the monster one,
To make my dad proud?

The fight lasts an hour,
With fish finally landed.
"Did Grandad help you catch it?"
"No, I caught it single handed!"

Alasdair Robertson
10WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH

GRANDAD'S WORK BENCH

His hands feel the rough wood,
What will it be,
In its excellence? Again,
the damp smells overcome me,
As the windows become frosted against the cold,
The cold heavy plane attacks the wood.
Next comes the saw with its serrated edge.
As I look up, a smile is returned.
Curved edges are formed with careful hands.
The seemingly effortless work is painstakingly done.
As I cut my wood with uneven strokes.
Grandad's work is finished at last,
A round top table is comapred to mine,
But what is mine?

Helen Norman
10WH

COMMENDED BY W.H. SMITH