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Advanced Verse-Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a}

WHITE RABBIT

For years, our dog tormented the white rabbit,
drank his water, spilled his grain,
stole his carrots, leeks
sat, unbudging, on his lettuce
and dandelion leaves.

She'd climb into his basket,
uncomfortable, obstinate,
hugely overflowing,
while the rabbit stalked away,
hid underneath the sideboard, slept.

Yet, creeping down one night
when everyone was sleeping,
puzzled by a bumping
I'd heard several times before,
I saw them, dog and rabbit,

galumping round the kitchen,
halting, grinning at each other,
galumping round again.
From time to time he'd crouch,
She'd lick him, head to tail,

or she'd lie, chest quivering,
legs surrendered to the air,
while he lolloped up to her,
leapt across her body,
hind legs skimming through her fur.

When the rabbit died
she was sitting on his carrot.
All week, she lay under the sideboard,
growling. And late each night,
if I strained into the dark, I heard her moans.

John Latham.

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

b} **Shakespeare:**

Female: **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**

Act 3 Scene 4

PORTIA: Come on, Nerissa. I have work in hand
That you yet know not of. We'll see our husbands
Before they think of us.

NERISSA: Shall they see us?

PORTIA: They shall, Nerissa, but in such a habit
That they shall think we are accomplished
With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutered like young men
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies
How honourable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died.
I could not do withal. Then I'll repent,
And wish for all that that I had not killed them;
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
That men shall swear I have discontinued school
Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging jacks
Which I will practise.

NERESSA: Why, shall we turn to men?

PORTIA: Fie, what a question's that
If thou wert near a lewd interpreter!
But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us
At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles today.

(Nerissa's lines are not spoken and movement is permissible)

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

b) **Shakespeare:**

Male: **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

Act 3 Scene 2

PUCK: My mistress with a monster is in love,
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take;
An ass's nowl I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimick comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky;
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania wak'd and straightway lov'd an ass.

(Movement is permissible)

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

c}

SNOW IN THE SUBURBS

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute;
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back upwards, when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and descend again.
The palings are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
And overturns him
And near inurns him
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

Thomas Hardy.

Performers speak (a) and (b) and recalls (c). Poems may be read.

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

Class 354

“The Golden Jubilee Perpetual Trophy”

Sonnet Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a}

SPRING

Nothing is so beautiful as spring –
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. – Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, Lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

Gerard Manley Hopkins.

b}

Own Choice.

Performers speak both poems, which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

Yeats Verse-Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a} **IN MEMORY OF EVA GORE-BOOTH AND CON MARKEWIECZ**

The light of evening, Lissadell,
Great windows open to the south,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.
But a raving autumn shears
Blossom from the summer’s wreath;
The older is condemned to death,
Pardoned, drags out lonely years
Conspiring among the ignorant.
I know not what the younger dreams –
Some vague Utopia – and she seems,
When withered old and skeleton-gaunt,
An image of such politics.
Many a time I think to seek
One or the other out and speak
Of that old Georgian mansion, mix
Pictures of the mind, recall
That table and the talk of youth,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.

Dear shadows, now you know it
all,
All the folly of a fight
With a common wrong or right.
The innocent and the beautiful.
Have no enemy but time;
Arise and bid me strike a match
And strike another till time
catch;
Should the conflagration climb,
Run till all the sages know.
We the great gazebo built,
They convicted us of guilt;
Bid me strike a match and blow.

W.B. Yeats.

b} A Yeats’ poem of own choice.

Performers speak both poems which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2000 or earlier.

“The Anne Marie Cotter Perpetual Challenge Cup”
Senior Women – 18 Years and Over

a}

THE WIFE’S TALE

When I had spread it all on linen cloth
 Under the hedge, I called them over.
 The hum and gulp of the thresher ran down
 And the big belt slewed to a standstill, straw
 Hanging undelivered in the jaws.
 There was such quiet that I heard their boots
 Crunching the stubble twenty yards away.

He lay down and said, “Give these fellows theirs,
 I’m in no hurry,” plucking grass in handfuls
 And tossing it in the air. “That looks well.”
 (He nodded at my white cloth on the grass.)
 “I declare a woman could lay out a field
 Though boys like us have little call for cloths.”
 He winked, then watched me as I poured a cup
 And buttered the thick slices that he likes.
 “It’s thrashing better than I thought, and mid
 It’s good clean seed. Away over there and look.”
 Always this inspection has to be made
 Even when I don’t know what to look for.

But I ran my hand in the half-filled bags
 Hooked to the slots. It was hard as shot,
 Innumerable and cool. The bags gaped
 Where the chutes ran back to the stilled drum
 And forks were stuck at angles in the ground
 As javelins might mark lost battlefields.
 I moved between them back across the stubble.

They lay in the ring of their own crusts and dregs,
 Smoking and saying nothing. “There’s good yield,
 Isn’t there? – as proud as if he were the land itself –
 “Enough for crushing and sowing both.”
 And that was it. I’d come and he had shown me,
 So I belonged no further to the work.
 I gathered cups and folded up the cloth
 And went. But they still kept their ease,
 Spread out, unbuttoned, grateful, under the trees.

Seamus Heaney.

Year of Birth: 1998 or earlier.

b}

DONAL ÓG

It is late last night the dog was speaking of you;
the snipe was speaking of you in her deep marsh.
It is you are the lonely bird through the woods;
and that you may be without a mate until you find me.

You promised me, and you said a lie to me,
that you would be before me where the sheep are flocked;
I gave a whistle and three hundred cries to you,
and I found nothing there but a bleating lamb.

You promised me a thing that was hard for you,
a ship of gold under a silver mast;
twelve towns with a market in all of them,
and a fine white court by the side of the sea.

You promised me a thing that is not possible,
that you would give me gloves of the skin of a fish;
that you would give me shoes of the skin of a bird;
and a suit of the dearest silk in Ireland.

My mother said to me not to be talking with you today,
or tomorrow, or on the Sunday;
it was a bad time she took for telling me that;
it was shutting the door after the house was robbed.

My heart is as black as the blackness of the sloe,
or as the black coal that is on the smith's forge;
or as the sole of a shoe left in white halls;
it was you put that darkness over my life.

You have taken the east from me; you have taken the west from me;
you have taken what is before me and what is behind me;
you have taken the moon, you have taken the sun from me;
and my fear is great that you have taken God from me!

Anon.

from the Irish (trans. Lady Gregory).

Performers speak both poems which may be read.

Year of Birth: 1998 or earlier.

Senior Men – 18 Years and Over

a }

KUBLA KHAN

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round:
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous
 rills
 Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing
 tree;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which
 slated
 Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
 A savage place! as holy and enchanted
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
 And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil
 seething,
 As if this earth in fast thick pants were
 breathing,
 A mighty fountain momently was forced:
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
 Hugh fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's frail:
 And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and
 ever
 It flung up momently the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
 And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war!
 The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw:
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she played,
 Singing of Mount Abora.
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome with air,
 That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge.**Year of Birth: 1998 or earlier.**

b}

OUT, OUT

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
And from there those that lifted eyes could count
Five mountain ranges one behind the other
Under the sunset far into Vermont.
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.
And nothing happened; day was all but done.
Call it a day, I wish they might have said
To please the boy by giving him the half hour
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
His sister stood beside them in her apron
To tell them "Supper". At the word, the saw
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap –
He must have given the hand. However it was,
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,
As he swung toward them holding up the hand
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all –
Since he was old enough to know, big boy
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart
He saw all spoiled. "Don't let them cut my hand off –
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"
So. But the hand was gone already.
The doctor put him in the dark of ether
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little – less – nothing! – and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

Robert Frost.

Performers speak both poems which may be read.

Year of Birth: 1998 or earlier.

Under 18 Yearsa) MY FATHER PERCEIVED AS A VISION OF ST. FRANCIS
for Brendan Kennelly

<p>It was the piebald horse in next door’s garden frightened me out of a dream with her dawn whinny. I was back in the boxroom of the house, my brother’s room now, full of ties and sweaters and secrets. Bottles chinked on the doorstep, the first bus pulled up to the stop. The rest of the house slept</p> <p>except for my father. I heard him rake the ash from the grate, plug in the kettle, hum a snatch of a tune. Then he unlocked the back door and stepped out into the garden.</p> <p>Autumn was nearly done, the first frost whitened the slates of the estate. He was older than I had reckoned, his hair completely silver, and for the first time I saw the stoop of his shoulder, saw that his leg was stiff. What’s he at? So early and still stars in the west?</p>	<p>They came then: birds of every size, shape, colour; they came from the hedges and shrubs, from eaves and garden sheds, from the industrial estate, outlying fields, from Dubber Cross they came and the ditches of the North Road.</p> <p>The garden was a pandemonium when, my father threw up his hands and tossed the crumbs to the air. The sun cleared O’Reilly’s chimney and he was suddenly radiant, a perfect vision of St. Francis, made whole, made young again, in a Finglas garden.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Paula Meehan.</u></p>
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Performers speak both poems.

Years of Birth: 1999 and 2000.

b}

EVENING: PONTE AL MARE, PISA

The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
 The bats are flitting fast in the grey air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
 And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

There is no dew on the dry grass tonight,
 Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
 And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.

Within the surface of the fleeting river
 The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it never fades away...

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Performers speak both poems.

Years of Birth: 1999 and 2000.

Under 16 Years

a}

AFTER THE TITANIC

They said I got away in a boat
And humbled me at the inquiry. I tell you
I sank as far that night as any
Hero. As I sat shivering on the dark water
I turned to ice to hear my costly
Life go thundering down in a pandemonium of
Prams, pianos, sideboards, winches,
Boilers bursting and shredded ragtime. Now I hide
In a lonely house behind the sea
Where the tide leaves broken toys and hat-boxes
Silently at my door. The showers of
April, flowers of May mean nothing to me, nor the
Late light of June, when my gardener
Describes to strangers how the old man stays in bed
On seaward mornings after the nights of
Wind, takes his cocaine and will see no-one. Then it is
I drown again with all those dim
Lost faces I never understood. My poor soul
Screams out in the starlight, heart
Breaks loose and rolls down like a stone.
Include me in your lamentations.

Derek Mahon.

Performers speak (a) and recalls (b)

Year of Birth: 2001.

b}

HUMMING BIRD

I can imagine, in some other world
Primeval-dumb, far back
In that most awful stillness, that only gasped and hummed,
Humming-birds raced down the avenues.

Before anything had a soul,
While life was a heave of Matter, half inanimate,
This little bit chipped off in brilliance
And went whizzing through the slow, vast, succulent stems.

I believe there were no flowers, then
In the world where the humming bird flashed ahead of creation.
I believe he pierced the slow vegetable veins with his long beak.

Probably he was big
As mosses, and little lizards, they say were once big.
Probably he was a jabbing, terrifying monster.

We look at him through the wrong end of the long telescope of Time,
Luckily for us.

D.H. Lawrence.

Performers speak (a) and recalls (b)

Year of Birth: 2001.

Class 361

Girls Under 15 Years

EITHER:

WOMAN WORK

I've got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I've got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The cane to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind
Let me float across the sky
'Till I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes
Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You're all that I can call my own.

Maya Angelou.

Year of Birth: 2002.

OR:

LAST WALTZ

Solo was a Dodo
the last one in the land.
She didn't go to parties
or dance to birdland bands.
She hadn't got a partner,
she hadn't got a friend,
until –
 she met a Panda,
 a Pandaman called Ben.

Will you dance with me? Asked Solo
Can we be a party pair?
Will you take a sprig of blossom
 - will you weave it in my hair?
Will you hold me very tightly?
 - can I hold you to my breast?
 - can I snuggle really closely
 upon your hairy chest?

The woodland flutes played softly,
the evening sang its charms
 to a Panda dancing slowly
 with a Dodo
 in its arms.

Peter Dixon.

Year of Birth: 2002.

Class 362

Girls Under 14 Years

EITHER:

ON A CAT, AGEING

He blinks upon the hearth-rug,
And yawns in deep content,
Accepting all the comforts
That Providence has sent.

Louder he purrs and louder,
In one glad hymn of praise
For all the night's adventures,
For quiet restful days.

Life will go on for ever,
With all that cat can wish;
Warmth and the glad procession
Of fish and milk and fish.

Only – the thought disturbs him –
He's noticed once or twice,
The times are somehow breeding
A nimbler race of mice.

Alexander Gray.

Year of Birth: 2003.

OR:

WILDLIFE

Why do we say wildlife
When wildlife isn't wild?
 It's mostly soft and gentle,
 it's mostly meek and mild.
We don't see lions bombing
and tigers driving tanks,
platoons of pink flamingos
or regiments of yaks.
We don't see wars of blue whales
or rabbits flying jets,
walruses with shotguns
or parachuting pets.
To me wildlife is gentle
it loves to hide away,
it's mostly shy and silent
it likes to run and play.
 It's really us that's wildlife
 our lifestyle's really wild
 bombs
 and bangs
 and burnings
 father, mother, child.

Peter Dixon.

Year of Birth: 2003.

Class 363

Girls Under 13 Years

EITHER:

LEONARDO

Leonardo, painter, taking
Morning air
On Market Street
Saw the wild birds in their cages
Silent in
The dust, the heat.

Took his purse from out his pocket
Never questioning
The fee,
Bore the cages to the green shade
Of a hill-top
Cypress tree.

“What you lost,” said Leonardo,
“I now give to you
Again,
Free as noon and night and morning,
As the sunshine,
As the rain.”

And he took them from their prisons,
Held them to
The air, the sky;
Pointed them to the bright heaven.
“Fly!” said Leonardo.
“Fly!”

Charles Causley.

Year of Birth: 2004.

OR:

MARMALADE

He's buried in the bushes,
with dockleaves round his grave,
A crimecat desperado
and his name is Marmalade.
He's the cat that caught the pigeon,
that stole the neighbour's meat...
and tore the velvet curtains
and stained the satin seat.
He's the cat that spoilt the laundry,
he's the cat that spilt the stew,
and chased the lady's poodle
and scratched her daughter too.

But –
No more we'll hear his cat flap,
or scratches at the door,
or see him at the window,
or hear his catnap snore.
So –
Ring his grave with pebbles,
erect a noble sign –
For here lies Marmalade
and Marmalade was MINE.

Peter Dixon.

Year of Birth: 2004.

Class 364

Girls Under 12 Years

EITHER:

ON WITH THE SHOW!

We've made the puppets and written the play,
Sooty and Sweep on a Windy Day,
We've painted the posters, had lots of fun,
But will anyone come?

We've thought of refreshments, we've baked some tarts,
We've practised the play, we all know our parts,
The costumes are sewn, the scenery's done,
But will anyone come?

We've poured out the orange juice, 2p a cup,
We've set out the classroom and tidied it up,
The programmes are printed, and playtime's begun,
But has anyone come?

They're here! They've arrived! There's a queue at the door,
Twenty or thirty, fifty or more,
"5p a ticket for Children in Need,
Please take your seats with all possible speed,
Welcome to Sooty - we're ready to go,
Ladies and Gentlemen - ON WITH THE SHOW!"

June Crebbin.

Year of Birth: 2005.

OR:

CASTING A SPELL

Learn a spell. It takes some time
First you must have the gift of rhyme,
New images, a melody.
Verse will do but poetry
Sometimes will come if you have luck.
Play tunes, blow trumpets, learn to pluck
The harp. The best of spells are cast
When you have written words to last,
Rich in subtle rhythms and
Right words which most will understand.
Casting a spell's a secret skill
Which few learn fast. No act of will
On your part hands the gift to you.
Words must surprise and yet ring true.
False sorcerers are everywhere
But the true magic's deep and rare.

Elizabeth Jennings.

Year of Birth: 2005.

Class 365

Girls Under 11 Years

EITHER:

THE BROWN BEAR

In winter,
When the cold winds blow,
When the land
Is covered with snow
The brown bear sleeps.

In winter,
When the nights come soon,
When the land
Freezes beneath the moon
The brown bear dreams.

The brown bear
Dreams of summer heat,
Of berries,
Honey and nuts to eat.
The brown bear sighs.

The brown bear
Stirs, then digs down deep,
Safe and sound
In its winter sleep.
The brown bear dreams.

John Foster.

Year of Birth: 2006.

OR:

THE DRAGON

There's a dragon in our garden
That hatched out under the shed,
Her scales are shaped like teardrops
And glow when she's been fed.

She sleeps all through the daytime,
Wings folded like a bat,
Gold and green and dreaming
And purring like a cat.

But she's getting wild and restless
So she'll fly away quite soon
To the only place
Where a dragon's safe:
Deep inside the moon.

Kevin McCann.

Year of Birth: 2006.

EITHER:

A KITTEN

He's nothing much but fur
And two round eyes of blue,
He has a giant purr
And a midget mew.

He darts and pats the air,
He starts and pricks his ear,
When there is nothing there
For him to see and hear.

He runs around in rings,
But why we cannot tell;
With sideways leaps he springs
At things invisible –

Then half-way through a leap
His started eyeballs close,
And he drops off to sleep
With one paw on his nose.

Eleanor Farjeon.

OR:

DISTRACTED THE MOTHER SAID TO HER BOY

Distracted the mother said to her boy
“Do you try to upset and perplex and annoy?
Now, give me four reasons – and don't play the fool –
Why you shouldn't get up and get ready for school.”

Her son replied slowly, “Well, mother, you see,
I can't stand the teachers and they detest me;
And there isn't a boy or a girl in the place
That I like or, in turn, that delights in my face.”

“And I'll give you two reasons,” she said, “Why you ought
Get yourself off to school before you get caught;
Because, first, you are forty and, next, you young fool,
It's your job to be there.
You're the head of the school.”

Gregory Harrison.

Year of Birth: 2007.

EITHER:

I CAN SEE YOU NOW

When I first met
My blind friend Grace
She said, "Will you please let me
Touch your face?"

I felt her gentle hands
Upon my skin:
She felt my lips and eyebrows
Then my nose and cheeks and chin.

Last of all she felt my hair
And gently held my head
Then with a lovely smile:
"I can see you now," she said.

Eric Finney.

OR:

JACK FROST

He's been again
In the night
Painting windows
Sparkling white

Silver trees
And frosty paths
Crystal footprints
Spiky grass

Spiders' webs
Of wintry lace
Jack Frost's touch
In every place.

Brenda Williams.

Class 368

Girls Under 8 Years

EITHER:

A GARDEN

If I should have a garden
I know how it would be,
There's be daisies and buttercups
And an apple tree.

A dog would chase a ball there,
A bird would sit and sing,
And a little cat would play with
A little piece of string.

And in the very middle
I'd only have to stand
For ladybirds and butterflies
To settle on my hand.

Leila Berg.

OR:

THE WRONG START

I got up this morning and meant to be good,
But things didn't happen the way that they should.

I lost my toothbrush
I slammed the door,
I dropped an egg
On the kitchen floor,
I spilled some sugar
And after that
I tried to hurry
And tripped on the cat.

Things may get better. I don't know when.
I think I'll go back and start over again.

Marchette Chute.

Year of Birth: 2009.

Class 369

Girls Under 7 Years

EITHER:

MY FRIEND CAMILLA

Before the winter
my friend Camilla
was a squiggly wriggly
caterpillar.

But soon she changed
her name to Chris
and turned into
a chrysalis.

In the spring she said,
“My name is Di”
and then became
a butterfly!

Charles Thomson.

OR:

CATS AND DOGS

Some like cats, and some like dogs,
And both of course are nice
If cats and dogs are what you want
- but I myself like mice.

For dogs chase cats, and cats chase rats
I guess they think it's fun.
I like my mouse the most because
He won't chase anyone.

N.M. Bodecker.

Year of Birth: 2010.

Class 370

Girls Under 6 Years

EITHER:

THE SUNSHINE TREE

If I had just one wish to wish
Do you know what it would be?
That growing in my garden
Was a great big sunshine tree.

A tree that never rained or blew,
A tree that shone all day.
And there I'd sit with all my toys
And play and play and play.

Clive Webster.

OR:

DOROTHY PORRIDGE

Dorothy Porridge is wearing a lettuce
And nobody quite knows why,
She's racing around like the spin of a coin
And waving her fist at the sky.
The last time I saw her she lifted a leaf
And gave me a wink of her eye,
Dorothy Porridge is wearing a lettuce
And nobody quite knows why.

Richard Edwards.

Year of Birth: 2011 or later.

EITHER:

A FEATHER FROM AN ANGEL

Anton's box of treasures held
a silver key and a glassy stone,
a figurine made of polished bone
and a feather from an angel.

The figurine was from Borneo,
the stone from France or Italy,
the silver key was a mystery
but the feather came from an angel.

We might have believed him if he'd said
the feather fell from a bleached white crow
but he always replied, "It's an angel's, I know,
a feather from an angel."

We might have believed him if he'd said,
"An albatross let the feather fall."
But he had no doubt, *no* doubt at all,
his feather came from an angel.

"I thought I'd dreamt him one night," he'd say,
"but in the morning I knew he'd been there;
he left a feather on my bedside chair,
a feather from an angel."

And it seems that all my life I've looked
for the sort of belief that nothing could shift,
something simple and precious as Anton's gift,
a feather from an angel.

Brian Moses.

Year of Birth: 2002 and 2003.

OR:

NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON

When daylight fades,
and orange sun dips behind ocean's rim
then round moon, round as a silver plate
will glow upon the village.

Tide is brimming now,
sea-water swirls and sparkles,
fishing boats all safe on the shore.

Inside the house, leaves are ready,
green leaves arranged by Ibu, mother,
filling them with fruits and cakes of rice,
offerings to carry to the temple.

The procession gathers, everyone is here,
some in clothes of brilliant colours,
purple and blue and red and yellow.

Now at the temple the drum-beat calls,
the rhythm of the gamelan stirs,
mixing magical music.

Children are gasping, laughing, clapping their hands
as puppets throw shadows on a lamp-lit screen
and men in masks act their story of warriors
and girls glide in green sarongs with golden
sashes.

Far into the night the fire of festival burns,
eyes grow weary, sleep calls softly...
but dreamy day tomorrow,
holidays begin.

David Bateson.

Year of Birth: 2002 and 2003.

EITHER:**AT THE END OF A SCHOOL DAY**

It is the end of a school day
 and down the long drive
 come bag-swinging, shouting children.
 Deafened, the sky winces.
 The sun gapes in surprise.

Suddenly the runners skid to a stop,
 stand still and stare
 at a small hedgehog
 curled up on the tarmac
 like an old, frayed cricket ball.

A girl dumps her bag, tiptoes forward
 and gingerly, so gingerly
 carries the creature
 to the safety of a shade hedge.
 Then steps back, watching.

Girl, children, sky and sun
 hold their breath.
 There is a silence,
 a moment to remember
 on this warm afternoon in June.

Wes Magee.

OR:**TUEN NG**

(The Dragon Boat Races)

The air is hushed round the waiting
 boats;
 water still before the race.
 Slowly paddles lift
 above the dragon-prows
 like giant wing-bones
 from a waking beast,
 stretching into space...

And then...
 they're off!
 Away

Fish scatter in dismay
 as dragon-racers slice the surface.
 Wings dip, whip water into waves;
 waves rise like flames,
 set light by sun.

Above, flags tug at their fetters,
 desperate to join the fun.
 And all around,
 like pumping, thumping, dragon-hearts,
 the pounding gongs,
 the beating drum.

Judith Nicholls.

EITHER:

CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT

Those cracks in the pavement,
as everyone knows,
mustn't be stepped on.
Not even a toe
should venture to try it.
Don't laugh, it's quite true.
Let me tell you the story
of Brian McGrew
who jumped on a crack
with an "I don't care" grin.
At once, the crack opened.
The boy was dragged in
by a large scaly hand.
He had time for one shriek,
then vanished entirely.
Gone for a week,
he was found in Australia,
mad as a hatter.
So don't say that avoiding
the cracks doesn't matter.
Just hop, skip and jump,
that's all you need do,
while remembering the story
of Brian McGrew.

Marian Swinger.

OR:

THE SHOOTING STARS

That night
we went out in the dark
and saw the shooting stars
was one of the best nights ever

It was as if someone
was throwing paint
across the universe

The stars just kept coming
and we "oohed" and "aahed"
like on bonfire night

And it didn't matter
they weren't real stars –
just bits of dust on fire
burning up in the atmosphere

And we stayed out there for ages
standing on this tiny planet
staring up at the vast cosmos

And I shivered
with the thrill
of it all

James Carter.

Class 379

Boys Under 11 Years

EITHER:

BIRTHDAY BIKE

For my birthday gift
I had a brand-new bike
With eighteen gears,
 Alloy wheels,
 Lights!

That night I should have slept
But found myself in Space.
I cycled past Mars
 To the stars,
 It was ace!

I didn't fall (not once)
Just kept on pedalling,
The spokes sparkling silver,
 The dark chain
 Humming.

I reached the Milky Way,
Whizzed up its spangled lanes,
Alone, but so happy!
 Then free-wheeled
 Down again.

Through my open window
I came riding in
Asleep, still in the saddle
 Just as dawn
 Was sliding in!

Ivan Jones.

Year of Birth: 2006.

OR:

THE CATS' PROTECTION LEAGUE

Midnight. A knock at the door.

Open it? Better had.

Three heavy cats, mean and bad.

They offer protection. I ask, "What for?"

The Boss-cat snarls, "You know the score.

Listen man and listen good

If you wanna stay in the neighbourhood,

Pay your dues or the toms will call

And wail each night on the backyard wall.

Mangle the flowers, and as for the lawn

A smelly minefield awaits you at dawn."

These guys meant business without a doubt

Three cans of tuna, I handed them out.

They then disappeared like bats into hell

Those bad, bad cats from the CPL.

Roger McGough.

Year of Birth: 2006.

Class 380

Boys Under 10 Years

EITHER:

ABOUT KNEES

Mum doesn't understand about knees,
how they need a smear of mud
to look cool in the playground.
She scrubs them with a flannel.

Mum doesn't understand about knees,
how they always stick out,
and they graze when you fall over.
She fixes plasters across them.

Mum doesn't understand about knees,
how they get the best bruises –
all purple and yellow blotches.
She rubs greasy ointment into them.

Mum doesn't understand about knees,
how they're just right for drawing
beetles on with a green felt tip.
She takes the nail brush to them.

Perhaps Mum should wear shorts next summer,
see what happens to HER knees.
And I'll be ready with the flannel,
the plasters, ointment and nail brush.

Alison Chisholm.

Year of Birth: 2007.

OR:

OH, OZZIE!

“Polar bear in the garden!” yelled Ozzie;
And we all rushed out to see,
But of course it wasn’t a bear at all –
Just a marmalade cat who’s jumped over the wall.
Oh, Ozzie!

“Mountain lion in the garden!” yelled Ozzie,
And we all rushed out to see,
But of course it wasn’t a lion with a roar –
Just the scruffy black dog who’d dug in from next door.
Oh, Ozzie!

“Kangaroo in the garden!” yelled Ozzie,
And we all stayed in and smiled,
And of course it wasn’t a kangaroo –
But a man-eating tiger escaped from the zoo.
Poor Ozzie.

Richard Edwards.

Year of Birth: 2007.

Class 381

Boys Under 9 Years

EITHER:

HELLO, MRS. MORLEY

Hello, Mrs. Morley, as you can see
There's nobody home now apart from me.
And I can't ask you in for a nice cup of tea
Because Mummy is hiding behind the settee,
And she's not coming out – whatever I say –
Until she's quite sure that you've gone away

One thing, Mrs. Morley, before you go,
There's something I really would like to know –
Just what *is* a name-dropping, snotty-nosed cat?
Next door have a Siamese – is it like that?

Jan Dean.

OR:

CHINESE NEW YEAR DRAGON

There's a brightly coloured dragon swaying down the street,
Stomping and stamping and kicking up its feet

There's a multi-coloured dragon – green, gold and red –
Twisting and twirling and shaking its head.

There's a silky-scaled dragon parading through the town,
Swishing and swooshing and rippling up and down

There's a swirling, whirling dragon, weaving to and fro,
Prancing and dancing and putting on a show

There's cheering and clapping as the dragon draws near – A
Sign of good luck and a happy new year!

John Foster.

Year of Birth: 2008.

EITHER:

JACK

Jack
is my best friend,
I know I can trust him.
I don't have to win things or
 prove that I'm strong.
When I'm in trouble
and nobody likes me,
I just call for Jack –
he's for me, right or wrong.

Jack
is my best friend,
who shares all my secrets.
My partner for ball games
and jumping off beds.
The last one I see
as I drift into sleeping,
and just as the pictures
of night fill my head –

Jack licks my nose.

Daphne Kitching.

OR:

FEBRUARY THE FIFTEENTH

February the fifteenth
What's remarkable about that?
Another nonedescript winter's day
Bare trees, cold wind, drizzly rain
Clouds of dreary grey

But in our house
February the fifteenth
Is brilliant
Like a blazing sun
Bursting through the rain clouds
Lighting everything up
With happy colours.

My baby brother
Was born today.
From now on
February the fifteenth
Will be Superspecialhooraybabybrother Day.

Roger Stevens.

Class 383

Boys Under 7 Years

EITHER:

BIRD TALK

“Think...” said the robin,
“Think...” said the jay,
sitting in the garden,
talking one day.

“Think about people –
the way they grow:
they don’t have feathers
at all, you know.

They don’t eat beetles,
they don’t grow wings,
they don’t like sitting
on wires and things.”
“Think!” said the robin.
“Think!” said the jay.
“Aren’t people funny
to be that way?”

Aileen Fisher.

OR:

THERE ARE BIG WAVES

There are big waves and little waves,
Green waves and blue.
Waves you can jump over,
Waves you dive through,
Waves that rise up
Like a great water wall,
Waves that swell softly
And don’t break at all,
Waves that can whisper,
Waves that can roar,
And tiny waves that run at you
Running on the shore.

Eleanor Farjeon.

Year of Birth: 2010 or later.

Class 384

Boys Under 6 Years

EITHER:

TADPOLES

Ten little tadpoles
playing in a pool.
“Come,” said the water-rat,
“come along to school.
Come and say your tables,
sitting in a row.”
And all the little tadpoles said,
“No, no, no!”

Ten little tadpoles
swimming in and out,
Racing and diving
and turning round about:
“Come,” said their mother,
“dinner-time, I guess.”
And all the little tadpoles cried,
“Yes, yes, yes!”

Rose Fyleman.

OR:

A FISHY PROBLEM

I wish, I wish, oh how I wish
That I could swim just like a fish!
To glide through waters green and cool,
And hide within the shadowed pool.

To swim they use their fins and tails;
They don't have legs, but lots of scales.
But if they don't have arms and things
Where do they put their water-wings?

Judi Buchanan.

Year of Birth: 2011 or later.