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Advanced Verse-Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a}

HOW DO I LOVE THEE?

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

b} **Shakespeare:**

Female: **HENRY IV PART 1** Act 2 Scene 3

LADY PERCY: O my good lord, why are you thus alone?
For what offence have I this fortnight been
A banished woman from my Harry's bed?
Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks,
And given my treasures and my rights of thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?
In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars,
Speak terms of manège to thy bounding steed,
Cry "Courage! To the field!" And thou hast talked
Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of pallisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners ransomed, and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream;
And in thy face strange motions have appeared,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portens are these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.

(Movement is permissible)

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

b) **Shakespeare:**

Male: **HAMLET** Act 3 Scene 4

HAMLET: Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was sealed on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the font of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is our husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon judgement: and what judgement
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! Where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth led virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason pandars will.

(Movement is permissible)

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

c}

A TENT

A tent went up on the grass:
just room for a boy and his brother,
who waited for day to pass –
kept wishing the day would pass
as they'd never wished of another.

At last they got their wish.
Darkness fell and off they went
feeling quite daredevilish –
yes, really quite daredevilish –
to spend a night in that tent.

Night is dizzy and deep;
the wall of a tent is thin;
they were almost too scared to sleep,
but whispered each other to sleep
as stars and ghosts listened in.

And the tent flew through the night
on the back of the turning world,
which brought them home all right,
them and the tent, still upright
and now lavishly dew-pearled.

Christopher Field.

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

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

Sonnet Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a}

ON SONNET 18

“So long as men can breathe and eyes can see” –
You don’t assume we’ll be around forever.
You couldn’t know that “this gives life to thee”
Only until the sun goes supernova.
That knowledge doesn’t prove your words untrue.
Neither time nor the advance of science
Has taken anything away from you,
Or faced down your magnificent defiance.
That couplet. Were you smiling as you wrote it?
Did you utter a triumphant “Yes”?
Walking round the garden did you quote it,
Sotto voce, savouring your success?
And did you always know, or sometimes doubt,
That passing centuries would bear you out?

Wendy Cope.

b}

Own Choice.

Performers speak both poems, which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

Yeats Verse-Speaking – 16 Years and Over

a}

HER PRAISE

She is foremost of those that I would hear praised.
I have gone about the house, gone up and down
As a man does who has published a new book,
Or a young girl dressed out in her new gown,
And though I have turned the talk by hook or crook
Until her praise should be the uppermost theme,
A woman spoke of some new tale she had read,
A man confusedly in a half dream
As though some other name ran in his head.
She is foremost of those that I would hear praised.
I will talk no more of books or the long war
But walk by the dry thorn until I have found
Some beggar sheltering from the wind, and there
Manage the talk until her name come round.
If there be rags enough he will know her name
And be well pleased remembering it, for in the old days,
Though she had young men's praise and old men's blame,
Among the poor both old and young gave her praise.

W.B. Yeats.

b}

A Yeats' poem of own choice.

Performers speak both poems, which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2003 or earlier.

Class 356 “The Anne Marie Cotter Perpetual Challenge Cup”

Senior Women – 18 Years and Over

a}

EXPLORER

Two o'clock:

Let out of the back door of the house, our cat
Is practicing the snow.

The layer of white makes a small, straight, crumbling cliff
Where we open the back door inwards. The cat
Sniffs it with suspicion, learns you can just about
Pat the flaking snow with a careful dab. Then
A little bolder, he dints it with one whole foot
- and withdraws it, curls it as if slightly lame,

And looks down at it, oddly. The snow is
Different from anything else, not like
A rug, or a stretch of lino, or an armchair to claw upon
And be told to *Get off!*

The snow is peculiar, but not forbidden. The cat
Is welcome to go out in the snow. Does
The snow welcome the cat?
He thinks, looks, tries again.

Three paces out of the door, his white feet find
You sink a little way all the time, it is slow and cold, but it
Doesn't particularly hurt. Perhaps you can even enjoy it, as something new.
So he walks on, precisely, on the tips of very cautious paws...

Half-past three, the cat stretched and warm indoors.
From the bedroom window we can see his explorations
- From door to fence, from fence to gate, from gate to wall to tree, and back,
Are long patterned tracks and trade-routes of round paw-marks
Which fresh snow is quietly filling.

Alan Brownjohn.

Year of Birth: 2001 or earlier.

Senior Women – 18 Years and Over

b}

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

William Wordsworth.

Performers speak both poems, which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2001 or earlier.

Senior Men – 18 Years and Over

a}

SAM

When Sam goes back in memory,
 It is to where the sea
 Breaks on the shingle, emerald-green,
 In white foam, endlessly;
 He says – with small brown eyes on
 mine –
 "I used to keep awake,
 And lean from my window in the moon,
 Watching those billows break.
 And half a million tiny hands,
 And eyes, like sparks of frost,
 Would dance and come tumbling into the
 moon,
 On every breaker tossed.
 And all across from star to star,
 I've seen the watery sea,
 With not a single ship in sight,
 Just ocean there, and me;
 And heard my father snore. And once,
 As sure as I'm alive,

Out of those wallowing, moon-flecked
 waves
 I saw a mermaid dive;
 Head and shoulders above the wave,
 Plain as I now see you,
 Combing her hair, now back, now front,
 Her two eyes peeping through;
 Calling me, 'Sam!' – quiet-like – 'Sam!'
 But me . . . I never went,
 Making believe I kind of thought
 'Twas someone else she meant ...
 Wonderful lovely there she sat,
 Singing the night away,
 All in the solitudinous sea
 Of that there lonely bay.
 "P'raps," and he'd smooth his hairless
 mouth,
 "P'raps, if 'twere now, my son,
 P'raps, if I heard a voice say, 'Sam!'
 Morning would find me gone."

Walter de la Mare.

Performers speak both poems which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2001 or earlier.

Senior Men – 18 Years and Over

b}

MOOSES

The goofy Moose, the walking house frame,
Is lost
In the forest. He bumps, he blunders, he stands.

With massy bony thoughts sticking out near his ears –
Reaching out palm upwards, to catch whatever might be
 falling from heaven –
He tries to think,
Leaning their huge weight
On the lectern of his front legs.

He can't find the world!
Where did it go? What does a world look like?
The Moose
Crashes on, and crashes into a lake, and stares at the
 mountain and cries:
'Where do I belong? This is no place!'

He turns dragging half the lake out after him
And charges the crackling underbrush –
He meets another Moose
He stares, he thinks: 'It's only a mirror!'
'Where is the world?' he groans. 'O my lost world!
And why am I so ugly?
And why am I so far away from my feet?'

He weeps.
Hopeless drops drip from his droopy lips.
The other Moose just stands there doing the same.

Two dopes of the deep wood.

Ted Hughes.

Performers speak both poems which may be read.

Year of Birth: 2001 or earlier.

“The Gloria Joy Perpetual Cup”

17 Years and Under

a}

IT WAS LONG AGO

I'll tell you, shall I, something I remember?
Something that still means a great deal to me.
It was long ago.

A dusty road in summer I remember,
A mountain and an old house, and a tree
That stood, you know,

Behind the house. An old woman I remember
In a red shawl with a grey cat on her knee
Humming under a tree.

She seemed the oldest thing I can remember,
But then perhaps I was not more than three.
It was long ago.

I dragged on the dusty road, and I remember
How the old woman looked over the fence at me
And seemed to know

How it felt to be three, and called out, I remember,
“Do you like bilberries and cream for tea?”
I went under the tree

And while she hummed, and the cat purred, I remember
How she filled a saucer with berries and cream for me
So long ago,

Such berries and such cream as I remember
I never had seen before, and never see
Today, you know.

And that is almost all I can remember,
The house, the mountains, the grey cat on her knee,
Her red shawl, and the tree,

And the taste of the berries, the feel of the sun I remember,
And the smell of everything that used to be
So long ago,

/over

Till the heat on the road outside again I remember,
And how the long dusty road seemed to have for me
No end, you know.

That is the farthest thing I can remember.
It won't mean much to you. It does to me.
Then I grew up, you see.

Eleanor Farjeon.

b}

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.

Performers speak both poems.

Years of Birth: 2002 and later.

15 Years and Under

EITHER:

IN THE ORCHARD

There was a giant by the Orchard Wall
Peeping about on this side and on that,
And feeling in the trees. He was as tall
As the big apple tree, and twice as fat:
His beard poked out, all bristly-black, and there
Were leaves and gorse and heather in his hair.

He held a blackthorn club in his right hand,
And plunged the other into every tree,
Searching for something – You could stand
Beside him and not reach up to his knee,
So big he was—I trembled lest he should
Come trampling, round-eyed, down to where I stood.

I tried to get away, but, as I slid
Under a bush, he saw me, and he bent
Down deep at me, and said, 'Where is she hid?'
I pointed over there, and off he went—

But, while he searched, I turned and simply flew
Round by the lilac bushes back to you.

James Stephens.

Year of Birth: 2004 and later.

Class 359

15 Years and Under

OR:

TEA WITH THE POET

We are going to tea with a poet.
Confidences poured out –
“One lump or two? Milk?”
- and passed round the table.

Hot toasted paragraphs
dripping with melted adjectives,
sentences with the crusts neatly cut off,
a tempting selection of metaphors –
“Must watch the figure”
- laid out on a plate for us to choose from.

It is teatime with the poet.
“A second cup? Certainly.
Push the haiku. A villanelle
Go on spoil yourself.
Sure you haven’t got room for a sonnet?
Oh, very well.”

Time to go.
He brushes up a few commas from the tablecloth
and, with a polite semi-colon;
shows us to the door.

Adrian Henri.

Year of Birth: 2004 and later.

Class 361

Girls 14 Years and Under

EITHER:

GEOGRAPHY LESSON

Our teacher told us one day he would leave
And sail across a warm blue sea
To places he had only known from maps,
And all his life had longed to be.
The house he lived in was narrow and grey
But in his mind's eye he could see
Sweet-scented jasmine clinging to the walls,
And green leaves burning on an orange tree.
He spoke of the lands he longed to visit,
Where it was never drab or cold.
I couldn't understand why he never left,
And shook off the school's stranglehold.
Then halfway through his final term
He took ill and never returned,
And he never got to that place on the map
Where the green leaves of the orange trees burned.
The maps were redrawn on the classroom wall,
His name was forgotten, it faded away,
But a lesson he never knew he taught
Is with me to this day.
I travel to where the green leaves burn
To where the ocean's glass-clear and blue,
To all those places my teacher taught me to love
But which he never knew.

Brian Patten.

Year of Birth: 2005 and later.

Class 361

Girls 14 Years and Under

OR:

THE HOUSE OF GHOSTS

First, to describe the house.
Who has not seen it?
Once, at the end of an evening's walk
The leaves that suddenly open,
And as sudden screen it,
With the first, flickering hint of shadowy eaves.

Was there a light in the high window?
Or only the moon's cool candle, palely lit?
Was there a pathway leading to the door?
Or only grass, and none to walk on it?

And surely someone cried:
'Who goes there, who?'
And ere the lips could shape the whispered 'I'
The same voice rose, and chuckled,
'You, tis you!'
A voice, or the furred night owl's cry?

Who has not seen the house?
Who has not started towards the gate, half-seen,
And paused, half-fearing,
And half beyond all fear.
And the leaves parted again,
And there was nothing in the clearing.

Humbert Wolfe.

Year of Birth: 2005 and later.

EITHER: ANNE AND THE FIELD MOUSE

We found a mouse in the quarry today
In a circle of stones and empty oil drums
By the fag ends of a fire. There had been
A picnic there; he must have been after the crumbs.

Jane saw him first, a flicker of brown fur
In and out of the charred wood and chalk-white.
I saw him last, but not till we turned up
Every stone and surprised him into flight.

Though not far – little zig-zag spurts from stone
To stone. Once, as he lurked in his hiding-place,
I saw his beady eyes uplifted to mine.
I'd never seen such terror in so small a face.

I watched, amazed and guilty. Beside us suddenly
A heavy pheasant whirred up from the ground,
Scaring us all; and, before we knew it, the mouse
Had broken cover, skimming away without a sound,

Melting into nettles. We didn't go
Till I'd chalked in capitals on a rusty can;
THERE'S A MOUSE IN THOSE NETTLES LEAVE
HIM ALONE. NOVEMBER 15th ANNE.

Ian Serrailier.

Year of Birth: 2006 and later.

OR: AN OWL FLEW IN MY BEDROOM ONCE

My attic bedroom had two windows –
One that opened high above the street
And a skylight – a tile of thick glass
Like a see-through slate.
And through it fell the moonlight
Coring the darkness like an apple-peeler.
Suddenly in that long cylinder of light
Appeared the owl, mysterious and grey
In that cold moon.
He flew in silently – a piece of night adrift –
Escaped. He circled, didn't settle
On the banister or rail.
There was no rattle of his talons,
No gripe or stomp
To make him solid with their sound,
He simply floated in – turned wide – and floated
out...
In the morning there was nothing
No down or limy dropping
Nothing to prove he'd ever been at all.

An owl flew in my bedroom once, I think.

Jan Dean.

EITHER:

CAT

Sometimes I am unseen
marmalade cat, friendliest colour,
making off through a window without permission,
jumping down with a soft, four-pawed thump,
finding two inches of creaking door
with loose brass handle,
slipping impossibly in,
flattening my fur at the hush and touch of the sudden warm air,
avoiding the tiled gutter of slow green water,
skirting the potted nests of tetchy cactuses,
and sitting with my tail flicked
skilfully underneath me, to sniff
the azaleas, the azaleas, the azaleas.

Alan Brownjohn.

OR:

CHOCS

Into the half-pound box of Moonlight
my small hand crept.
There was an electrifying rustle.
There was a dark and glamorous scent.
Into my open, moist mouth
the first Montelimar went.

Down in the crinkly second layer,
five finger-piglets snuffled
among the Hazelnut Whirl,
the Caramel Square,
the Black Cherry and Almond Truffle.

Bliss.

I chomped. I gorged.
I stuffed my face,
till only the Coffee Cream
was left for the owner of the box –
tough luck, Anne Pope –
oh, and half an Orange Supreme.

Carol Ann Duffy.

Year of Birth: 2007 and later.

Class 364

Girls 11 Years and Under

EITHER:

GHOST IN THE GARDEN

The ghost in the garden
Cracks twigs as she treads
Shuffles the leaves
But isn't there.

The ghost in the garden
Snaps back the brambles
So they spring against my legs
But isn't there.

Dawn's spiders' webs across my face
Breathes mist on my cheek
Whispers with breath down my ear
But isn't there.

Tosses raindrops down from branches
Splashes the pond
Traces a face in it
That isn't mine.

Moves shadows underneath the trees
Too tall, too thin, too tiny to be me.
Spreads bindweed out to catch me
Flutters wild wings about my head
Tugs at my hair
But isn't there.

And when I look
There's only the bend of grass
Where her running feet
Have smudged the dew
And there's only the sigh
Of her laughter
Trickling
Like
Moonlight
On
Wet weeds.

Berlie Doherty.

Year of Birth: 2008 and later.

OR:

NEVER TRUST A DRAGON

“I see you’ve arrived,” the dragon said,
Bright eyes like beacons set in his head.

“Yes,” said the vet. “Left as soon as I knew
Now tell me the problem, a touch of ‘flu?’”

“My flame has gone out, I can’t raise a spark,
Not much use when you hunt in the dark.”

The vet he peered down the gigantic throat,
Black as a chimney and reeking of soot.

He threw in some petrol, a match to ignite,
Fire-lighters, coal, and some dynamite.

The dragon covered a burp with his paw,
And a flicker of flame flashed down his jaw.

He licked his lips with a golden tongue:
“Take to your feet, vet, you’d better run.

I can feel my fires boil, they are returning.
In a couple of minutes you could be burning.”

Clutching a diamond the size of a star,
The vet scampered away to his car.

As he drove off the dragon’s bright fires
Gushed out of the cave and scorched his tyres.

The vet snapped his fingers, laughed at the brute
Because he was wearing his flame-proof suit.

David Harmer.

Year of Birth: 2008 and later.

EITHER: THE GARDEN'S FULL OF WITCHES

Mum! The garden's full of witches!
Come quick and see the witches.
There's a full moon out,
And they're flying about,
Come on! You'll miss the witches.

Oh! Mum! You're missing the witches.
You have never seen so many witches.
They're casting spells!
There are horrible smells!
Come on! You'll miss the witches.

Mum, hurry! Come look at the witches.
The shrubbery's bursting with witches.
They've turned our Joan
Into a garden gnome.
Come on! You'll miss the witches.

Oh no! You'll miss the witches.
The garden's black with witches.
Come on! Come on!
Too late! They're gone.
Oh, you always miss the witches!

Colin McNaughton.

Class 365

Girls 10 Years Under

OR:

BEWARE

The crocodile is coming!
It is heading for the pool,
It's swaying down the road
From the local Primary School.
Better keep your distance,
Better close your doors –
Beware the fearful clamour
From its ever open jaws!
Be careful not to stumble
As you hurry down the street:
Remember that the crocodile
Has sixty tramping feet!
Through the city jungle
The creature marches on.
Wisely, shoppers stand aside
And wait until he's gone.
It's going to cross the busy street
It starts to leave the path –
Attacked by snarling traffic
It's completely cut in half –
The head continues on its way,
The tail, delayed, just laughs
And runs to catch it up
At the Municipal Baths.
The crocodile is swimming
In the Public Swimming Pool,
But soon it will be heading
For the local Primary School.
So better keep your distance,
Better if you try
To find a place to hide
While the crocodile goes by.

June Crebbin.

Year of Birth: 2009 and later.

EITHER:**THE RELUCTANT GHOST**

It's a rotten night for haunting,
 There's a cheesy yellow moon
 Lighting up the cobwebs
 In my pokey attic gloom.

It's a rotten night for haunting,
 My chains need rusting too,
 They're getting far too shiny
 And they bruise me – black and
 blue.

It's a rotten night for haunting,
 I think I've got a cold,
 My groans are very croaky,
 And my armour needs new mould.

It's a rotten night for haunting,
 And I don't see why I should
 Go screaming round the dungeons,
 And rise up from the wood.

It's a rotten night for haunting.
I don't care what they like!
 I'll sleep a hundred years or so –
 Because I've gone on strike.

Jacqueline Emery.**OR:****THE VISITOR**

it came today to visit
 and moved into our house
 it was smaller than an elephant
 but larger than a mouse

first it slapped my sister
 then it kicked my dad
 then it pushed my mother
 oh! that really made me mad

it went and tickled rover
 and terrified the cat
 it sliced apart my necktie
 and rudely crushed my hat

it smeared my head with
 honey
 and filled the tub with rocks
 and when I yelled in anger
 it stole my shoes and socks

that's just the way it happened
 it happened all today
 before it bowed politely
 and softly went away.

Jack Prelutsky.**Year of Birth: 2010 and later.**

EITHER:

MY PET MOUSE

I have a friendly little mouse,
He is my special pet.
I keep him safely on a lead
I haven't lost him yet.

I never need to feed him
Not even bits of cheese
He's never chased any cat
And he does just as I please.

He likes it when I stroke him,
For he's smooth and grey and fat.
He helps me sometimes with my
 games,
When he runs around my mat.

I've never known a mouse
That could really be much cuter.
He's my extra special electric
 mouse
That works my home computer.

David Whitehead.

OR:

**I DON'T WANT TO GO
UP TO BED**

I don't want to go up to bed.
I want to watch TV instead.
It's true, as you say,
That it's been a long day,
But I just don't feel tired in
 my head.

I know that I've cried and I've
 cried,
But now I am really wide-eyed.
It's true, as you say,
That it's been a long day,
But I just don't feel tired in
 my head.

John Kitching.

Year of Birth: 2011 and later.

EITHER:

BOBBY'S BUBBLE GUM

Bobby loved his bubble gum
Big and fat and wide.
Bobby blew his bubble gum
Then swallowed it inside.
The bubble gum swelled up and grew
Inside Bobby's belly
Till Bobby wobbled round the room
Like a bowl of jelly.

Bobby clutched his aching guts,
His Mum began to cry;
And POP!
 He hit the sky.

So when you blow your bubble gum
Big and fat and wide:
Let it cover up your grin,
Let it dribble down your chin,
Let it cling on to your skin –
But don't swallow it inside.

Dave Ward.

OR:

**I HAD A LITTLE
NUT TREE**

I had a little nut tree;
Nothing would it bear
But a silver nutmeg
And a golden pear;
The King of Spain's
 daughter
Came to visit me,
And all for the sake of
My little nut tree.
I skipped over water,
I danced over sea,
And all the birds in the air
Couldn't catch me.

Anon.

Year of Birth: 2012 and later.

Class 369

Girls 6 Years and Under

EITHER:

MY HAT

Here's my hat.
it holds my head,
the thoughts I've had
and the things I've read.

It keeps out the wind.
It keeps off the rain.
It hugs my hair
and warms my brain.

There's me below it,
The sky above it.
It's my lid
and I love it.

Tony Mitton.

OR:

TEDDY BEAR

I wished I had a teddy bear
That I could call my own
Someone who would share with me
My thoughts when I'm alone.
He need not be a big one,
And colour I don't mind,
Fat or thin, old or new,
A bear of any kind.
I'd always keep him with me
Until the very end
For a teddy bear for some folks
It always a best friend.

Tricia Hawcroft.

Year of Birth: 2013 and later.

Class 370

Girls 5 Years and Under

EITHER:

FURRY HOME

If I were a mouse
And wanted a house,
I think I would choose
My new red shoes.
Furry edge,
Fur inside,
What a lovely place to hide!
I'd not travel,
I'd not roam –
Just sit inside
My furry home.

J. M. Westrup.

OR:

CROCODILE

I met a crocodile today.
I took him home with me.
I introduced him to my folks
Who said, "Please stay for tea."

He didn't like the beans on toast,
He didn't like the bread,
But he liked my Auntie Gertrude,
So he swallowed her instead.

Gareth Owen.

Year of Birth: 2014 and later.

Class 376

Boys 14 Years and Under

EITHER:

IN LONDON TOWN

It was a bird of Paradise,
Over the roofs he flew.
All the children, in a trice,
Clapped their hands and cried, “How nice!
Look – his wings are blue!”

His body was of ruby red
His eyes were burning gold
All the grown-up people said,
“What a pity the creature is not dead
For then it could be sold!”

One was braver than the rest,
He took a loaded gun;
Aiming at the emerald crest,
He shot the creature through the breast,
Down it fell in the sun.

It was not heavy, it was not fat,
And folk began to stare.
“We cannot eat it, that is flat!
And such outlandish feathers as that
Why, who could ever wear?”

They flung it into the river brown.
“A pity the creature died!”
With a smile and with a frown,
Thus they did in London town:
But all the children cried.

Mary E. Coleridge.

Year of Birth: 2005 and 2006.

Class 376

Boys 14 Years and Under

OR:

FISHBONES DREAMING

Fishbones lay in the smelly bin.
He was a head, a backbone and a tail.
Soon the cats would be in for him.
He didn't like to be this way
He shut his eyes and dreamed back.
Back to when he was fat, and hot on a plate.
Beside green beans, with lemon juice
squeezed on him. And a man with a knife
and fork raised, about to eat him.
He didn't like to be this way.
He shut his eyes and dreamed back.
Back to when he was frozen in the freezer.
With lamb cutlets and minced beef with prawns.
Three month he was in there.
He didn't like to be this way.
He shut his eyes and dreamed back.
Back to when he was squirming in a net,
with thousands of other fish, on the deck
of a boat. And the rain falling
Wasn't wet enough to breathe in.
He didn't like to be this way.
He shut his eyes and dreamed back.
Back to when he was darting through the sea,
past crabs and jellyfish, and others
like himself. Or surfing to jump for flies
and feel the sun on his face.
He liked to be this way.
He dreamed hard to try and stay there.

Matthew Sweeney.

Year of Birth: 2005 and 2006.

Class 377

Boys 12 Years and Under

EITHER:

BORING MR. GRIMBLE

Creeping past the gym last night
I heard a chilling cry –
And there was Mr. Grimble
(Boring Mr. Grimble
With the neatly knotted tie).
Swinging from the wall bars
With a patch across his eye.

He raised the skull and crossbones
While the floor rocked to and fro.
And I hid from Mr. Grimble
(Boring Mr. Grimble
With his voice so soft and low),
When his silver earring glinted
And he thundered, “Yo-ho-ho!”

Sitting in my class today
I squeeze my eyelids tight.
And I still see Mr. Grimble
(Boring Mr. Grimble
With his shoes so shiny bright),
Brandishing his cutlass
As our school sails through the night.

Clare Bevan.

Year of Birth: 2007 and later.

Class 377

Boys 12 Years and Under

OR:

A BIRD CAME DOWN

A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad, -
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, splashless, as they swim.

Emily Dickinson.

Year of Birth: 2007 and later.

Class 378

Boys 11 Years and Under

EITHER:

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

When we climbed the slopes of the cutting
We were eye-level with the white cups
Of the telegraph poles and the sizzling wires.

Like lovely freehand they curved for miles
East and miles west beyond us, sagging
Under their burden of swallows.

We were small and thought we knew nothing
Worth knowing. We thought words travelled the wires
In the shiny pouches of raindrops,

Each one seeded full with the light
Of the sky, the gleam of the lines, and ourselves
So infinitesimally scaled

We could stream through the eye of the needle.

Seamus Heaney.

Year of Birth: 2008 and later.

Class 378

Boys 11 Years and Under

OR:

NOAH AND THE RABBIT

“No land,” said Noah,
“There – is – not – any – land
Oh, Rabbit, Rabbit, can’t you understand?”

But Rabbit shook his head:
“Say it again,” he said:
“And slowly, please.
No good brown earth for burrows,
And no trees;
No wastes where vetch and rabbit-parsley grows,
No brakes, no bushes and no turnip rows,
No holt, no upland, meadowland or weald,
No tangled hedgerows and no playtime field?”
“No land at all – just water,” Noah replied,
And Rabbit sighed.
“For always, Noah?” he whispered, “will there be
Nothing henceforth for ever but the sea?”
Or will there come a day
When the green earth will call me back to play?”

Noah bowed his head:
“Some day... some day,” he said.

Hugh Chesterman.

Year of Birth: 2008 and later.

Class 379

Boys 10 Years and Under

EITHER:

FRIENDS

I fear it's very wrong of me,
And yet I must admit,
When someone offers friendship
I want the *whole* of it.
I don't want everybody else
To share my friends with me.
At least, I want *one* special one,
Who, indisputably,

Likes me much more than all the rest,
Who's always on my side,
Who never cares what others say,
Who lets me come and hide
Within his shadow, in his house –
It doesn't matter where –
Who lets me simply be myself,
Who's always, *always* there.

Elizabeth Jennings.

Year of Birth: 2009 and later.

OR:

WHY DO I HAVE TO CLEAN MY ROOM?

Why do I have to clean my room
when I would rather play?
The crayons scattered on the floor
are hardly in the way.
I almost never trip upon
my basketball or drums,
and I don't pay attention
to the cake and cookie crumbs.

Why do I have to clean my room?
I think my room looks nice.
There's pizza in the corner,
but it's only half a slice.
I'm not at all concerned about
the gravy on the chair,
my piles of model planes and trains,
my stacks of underwear.

I will admit some bits of clay
are sticking to the wall.
I scarcely even notice them
and do not mind at all.
Beneath my bed there's just a wedge
of last week's apple pie,
and yet I have to clean my room...
I simply don't know why.

Jack Prelutsky.

Year of Birth: 2009 and later.

EITHER:

MY NEWT

I found it in the playground
Looking very cute.
I took it to my teacher
Who said, "It's called a newt."

She put it in a fish tank
And fed it every day.
It grew and grew. "That's strange,"
she said.
"Whatever does it weight?"

It ate as much as forty dogs,
Drank water by the flagon.
The Head came in to have a look,
Said, "Newt? THAT is a DRAGON!"

She called the Head of Fairy Tales
To take the beast away.
It lives now in a deep, dark cave
With jewels on display.

Pam Gidney.

OR:

HELP

Catch hold of my leg!
Catch hold of my toe!
I'm flying away
And I don't want to go.

I bought this balloon
Just a minute ago
From the man with a beard
Who's still standing below.

Why didn't he tell me,
Why didn't he say
A balloon of this size
Would just fly me away?

Catch hold of my leg!
Catch hold of my toe!
I'm flying away
And I don't want to go.

Barbara Ireson.

Year of Birth: 2010 and later.

EITHER:

THE MONSTER
UNDER YOUR BED

Don't shout at the monster
Under your bed –

It's terribly lonely,
It's never been fed,
It can't fool around,
And it can't make a noise,
Its friends are the beetles
And old, broken toys.

It sleeps in a tangle
Of tissues and socks,
Its voice is as soft
As the ticking of clocks,
It's not like the monsters
Who lurk in your dreams,
It's frightened of footsteps,
And slippers, and screams.
It's tiny and timid,
It's green, pink and blue,
It's under your bed, and...

It's hiding from YOU!

Clare Bevan.

OR:

ELEPHANT WALKING

We're swaying through the jungle
Dizzy with the heat,
Searching for a water-hole
To cool our heavy feet.

Trample on the grasses;
Then stop and breathe the scent
Of flower and leaf – and tiger!
And we watch the way he went.

Then on again we stumble,
Searching for a drink;
We find a spilling river,
And into it we sink.

Clive Sansom.

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Year of Birth: 2011 and later.

EITHER:

BED IN SUMMER

In Winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candlelight.
In Summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds sill hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's
feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

Robert Louis Stevenson.

OR:

GRAN'S OLD DIARY

I found my gran's old diary,
it has a lock and key.
I found it in the attic,
when you explored with me.

My gran wrote her old diary
many years ago.
She used the blackest ink
on pages white as snow.

And inside Gran's old diary
something caught my eye:
it was a tiny buttercup
pressed flat from years gone by.

Wes Magee.

Class 383

Boys 6 Years and Under

EITHER:

WHO'S IN?

“The door is shut fast
And everyone’s out.”
But people don’t know
What they’re talking about!
Says the fly on the wall,
And the flame on the coals
And the dog on his rug
And the mice in their holes,
And the kitten curled up,
And the spiders that spin –
“What, everyone out?
Why, everyone’s in!”

Elizabeth Fleming.

OR:

SNOW

In the gloom of whiteness,
In the great silence of snow,
A child was sighing
And bitterly saying: “Oh,
They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,
The down is fluttering from her breast!”
And still it fell through that dusky brightness
On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

Edward Thomas

Year of Birth: 2013 and later.

Class 384

Boys 5 Years and Under

EITHER:

SO BIG!

The dinosaur, an ancient beast,
I'm told, was very large.
His eyes were big as billiard balls,
His stomach, a garage.
He had a huge and humping back,
A neck as long as Friday.
I'm glad he lived so long ago
And didn't live in my day!

Max Fatchen.

OR:

IT SEEMS VERY STRANGE

The River has a bed,
And it's very, very deep
But it's always wide-awake
And it never goes to sleep.
The clock has hands,
But it wears them on its face,
The table has legs
But needles can't see –
It all seems very strange to me.

John D. Sheridan.

Year of Birth: 2014 and later.