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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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JANUARY 2019

TERRY MCDONAGH
presents

A Special Edition of Children's Poetry

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



© Mark Ulyseas Photography

Children of the Hmong tribe at the Hmong New Year celebrations in Luang Prabang, Laos PDR.

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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount for this just cause.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

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CONTRIBUTORS

TERRY MCDONAGH
Guest Editorial

LISA WEBER

LILIAN BARAKA

TOINI RAVOLA

HANNA LE HAN MAO

FIONA MAO

ANTARA GOPALAN

LILIANE BRUSA

ELISE CAREY-MCGIBNEY

ELLA SKY HACKNEY

REBECCA O'NEILL

MAE BROWNER

TEAGAN PARRY

EVA DOMENICA MODLY DE JIRA HURST

AMEDEO

FERDI

BEATRICE

BARTEK

SOPHIA

ANNABEL

MAJA

KESHAV

OSCAR

JAN

NICK

EUAN

LILLY

ZOE

CATHAL CASEY

CALLUM CASEY

AOIFE CASEY

SAOIRSE CASEY

AVA

CHERYL

JENNY

SARAH

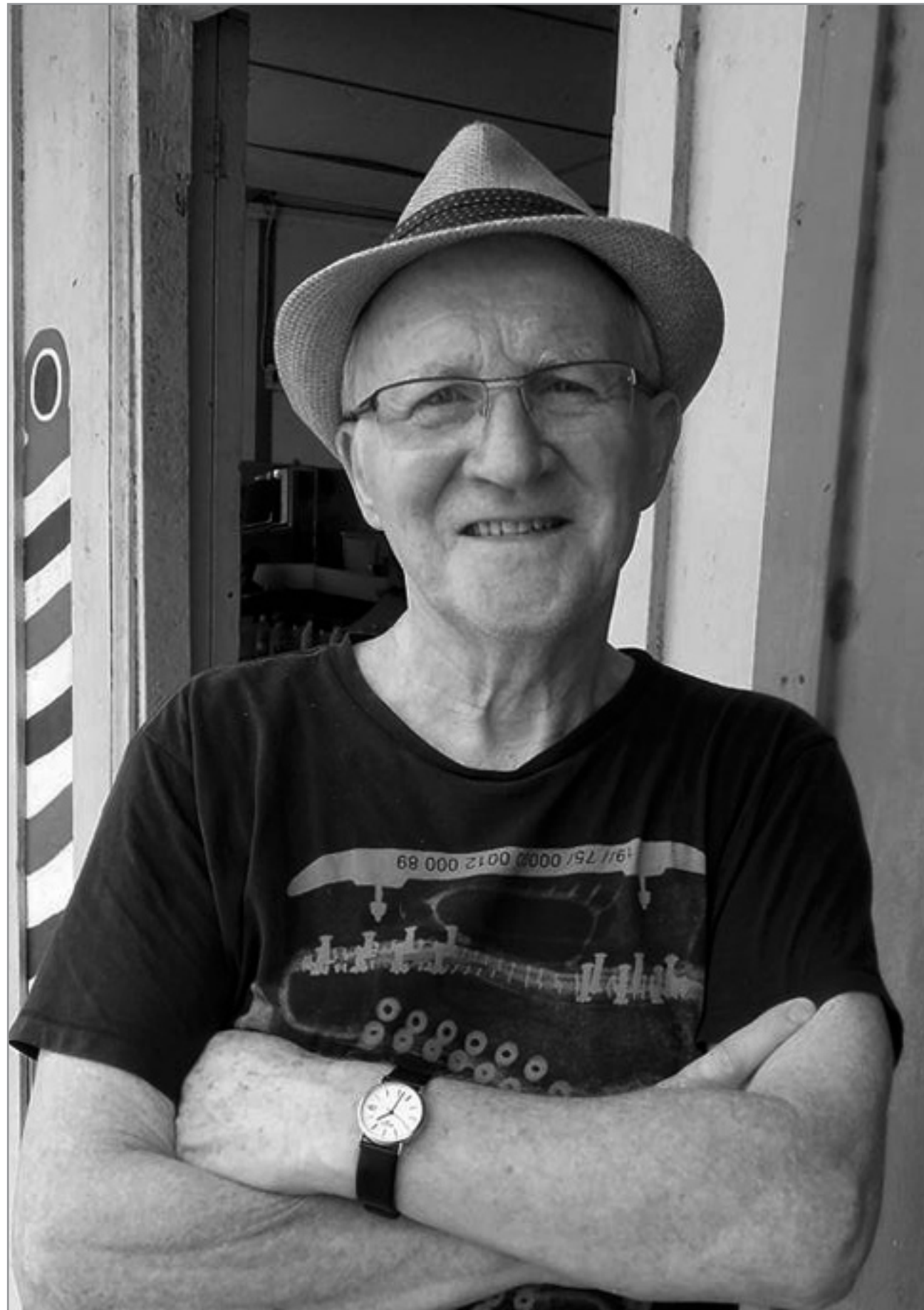
SHALEV COHEN

IVO TOULOUSE

MIUCCIA SCHMID

SØRENSEN MADSEN

DUBLIN SCHOOLCHILDREN



Terry McDonagh

Terry McDonagh taught creative writing at Hamburg University. Was Drama Director at International School Hamburg. Published ten poetry collections, letters, drama, prose and poetry for young people. Translations into Indonesian and German. 2016 poetry collection, *'Lady Cassie Peregrina'* – Arlen House. 2017, included in *Fire and Ice 2* Gill Education. 2017, *UCG by Degrees* included in Galway Poetry Trail. 2017, Director of *WestWords*, Germany's first Irish lit. festival in Hamburg. His latest collection, *Fourth Floor Flat – 44 Cantos*, published in September 2018 by Arlen House. www.terry-mcdonagh.com

TERRY MCDONAGH

Guest Editorial

A Special Edition of Children's Poetry

It's hard to imagine that Live Encounters is celebrating its ninth birthday. These have been nine special years. Mark Ulyseas has provided a wonderful platform for writers and artists from a whole variety of national and international backgrounds and the magazine continues to grow and flourish.

Now to celebrate these years, Live Encounters – affectionately LE – is bringing out a special edition of children's and teenagers' work. A rampant wheelbarrow of ideas, dreams, hopes, thoughts and expression. Imagination speaks from the heart and children speak from the heart. They write, sculpt, sketch, dance and perform in ways best known to the youthful mind. Given a healthy climate, children will always surprise and grant us access to a rich world that will often belie their tender years.

The arts are building blocks that create a vibrant, inventive and rounded personality. Thankfully there are still lots of teachers, parents and guardians that have not relinquished the rich, artistic side of what it means to be fully human. Teachers read to children in class, create original theatre, allow playtime and challenging activities. Parents read and tell stories before bedtime.

From my own point of view, the really exciting work with young people takes place in the classroom or at festivals and occasions when I facilitate creative writing and drama workshops. I am always surprised, amused, touched by the humour in children's work. It's as if I can feel aspects of my own childhood creeping back into my adult bones.



I was sad when he passed away this year but he's left us countless thought-provoking, happy and amusing poems such as:

Cows on the Beach

Two cows,
fed-up with grass, field, farmer,
barged through barbed wire
and found the beach.
Each mooed to each:
this is a better place to be,
a stretch of sand next to the sea,
this is the place for me.

Matthew is only one of many writers and poets who, in their work, have sought or seek out the challenge of trying to reach out to the world of young people. Poets Michael Rosen, Carol Ann Duffy, Roger McGough, Hollie McNish, Adrian Henry or Benjamin Zephaniah – to name but a few – do it so well. Adrian Mitchell wrote wonderful plays; Roald Dahl was an industry of words; Oscar Wilde gave us beautiful stories; we have JK Rowling with her Harry Potter, Kate DiCamillo. The list goes on.

It seems like a cliché but it's true that an enlightened child will, most likely become a rounded and responsible adult. The arts can play such an important role in this, and especially at a time when educational systems are placing more and more emphasis on control, assessment and results. It would seem as if they wish to tie imagination to a fence-post in the hope that wind and rain will somehow wash it away. But thankfully imagination is greater than chains and test results. The wheels of systems roll on and on and it is our duty to sidestep these limitations and what better way to do this than to awaken dreams, instil confidence and pass on rich language to the next generation. Writing, in whatever genre, is by its very nature organic and changing. It's constantly pushing accepted boundaries and challenging style and format.

There's also the very popular poetry slam and performance poetry that comes in all shapes and sizes. It draws huge audiences often including music and movement. In Ireland, since 2006, Poetry Aloud, has become an annual poetry speaking competition open to all post-primary students. It is organised by Poetry Ireland, The National Library and University College Cork. It has flourished and grown beyond all expectation. In the USA, Poetry Out Loud, initiated and organised by The Poetry Foundation since 2005, helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literature, literary history and contemporary life.

From my own point of view, the really exciting work with young people takes place in the classroom or at festivals and occasions when I facilitate creative writing and drama workshops. I am always surprised, amused, touched by the humour in children's work. It's as if I can feel aspects of my own childhood creeping back into my adult bones.

In this special edition of Live Encounter's writing, children are granted a unique opportunity to see their work in published form. Thanks to Mark Ulyseas for allowing this to happen.

Lisa Weber, born in Germany and raised in the USA, is a 9th grader at Bonn International School, Bonn, Germany. She enjoys writing in her free time. She tends to spend her weekends reading and hanging out with her friends. In the future, she hopes to study business and marketing in order to become a marketing manager.



THE MONSTER WITHIN

In elementary school, we were told to draw a monster. Most kids drew a troll with an ungodly amount of eyes or a witch with a hissing potion, but I didn't draw a dragon or even a slithery creature; I drew you. The one person who never owned up to the pain you left me with. The one person who never owned up to the scars you created with your cutting criticism. Your opinion was supposed to be the only one that mattered, yet your opinion is the only one that hurts. You treated me like a rose that's spent months trying to bloom only to be picked when it is deemed beautiful enough. Only I never got picked because after all, in your eyes, how can something so broken be beautiful? You said that I never bloomed, you said that I never even fit in. But what I hate the most about you is that you aren't a bully taunting me at school. You aren't a parent that doesn't think I'm good enough. You aren't a fake friend pretending to make me better. You are me because I'm the only one that can hurt myself more than the burning world I learned to grow up in.

My name is Lilian Baraka (from Austria) and I am twelve years old. I really enjoy writing and the reason why I really like this poem is because it reminds me of a beach in Myanmar (where I used to live) and I can share lots memories with it.



AT THE SEA

I am waiting, waiting for the perfect wave.
Then, I see it slowly coming, putting on its splashing crown and within the whirling waters I am rushing to the shore. Being one with everything.

I am running over thousands of pebbles but their rubbing makes no sound, just the wind that whistles.

At my Sandy Castle, there is battle with the waves. At one fell swoop, mighty towers turning mud and I laugh and laugh.

In my bed, in the dark I am listening to the waves going back and forth and with every splash and roar and the hermit crabs at shore. I feel part of everything.

Toini Ravola is a twelve year old girl from Finland. She lives in Germany and is currently going to school at Bonn International School (BIS). She enjoys playing with her cats and playing video games.



THE RAFT

Up, down, up, down, the small orange raft bobbed gently forward on the calm sea. Bit by bit, I opened my eyes and rubbed the sleep out of them. The world was peacefully quiet except for the splish-splashing of the water against the raft. My clothes felt damp and uncomfortable against my skin as I got up. The space was small, only occupied by myself and a small, brown rucksack. I slowly hobbled to the rucksack sitting in the corner of the raft. What had happened? Where was I? I opened the rucksack, inside there was a flashlight, a small net, a few matches, a notebook, and an old rusty tin. Embroidered onto the inside of the rucksack was a name. Christopher. Was that my name? Next to the rucksack was a small chunk of fabric, about the same color as the raft. I picked it up and rubbed it between my fingers, it was rough and the strings keeping it together felt broken.

Suddenly my eyes flashed white. Pictures skimmed through my head. A woman and a boy, running. I was holding the boy's life jacket tightly in my fist. We were on a boat, water surrounding us on every side. The boat swayed viciously knocking me off my feet. I flew off the boat into the cold water. Quickly, I swam over to one of the small rafts, but just as I had gotten in, a fierce wave flung a large piece of wood straight at my head. After that everything went black.

I woke up again in the afternoon. The sun was starting to set and the sky was a pink-purple color. My stomach rumbled loudly as I stood up. I sighed, how was I supposed to get anything to eat in the middle of nowhere? Suddenly I remembered the net in the rucksack. I could probably try to catch some fish with it. Quickly I took the net out of the bag and walked over to the narrow opening on the side of the raft. I looked into the water, I could see small fish swimming around. Good, I thought, at least I had something to eat. I put the net in the water and waited. It felt like an eternity, waiting there with nothing to do. The scenery never changed, the sounds never changed it was all just the endless sea and Splish-splashing of the waves. All of a sudden I felt a rough jerk almost pull the net out of my hands. I quickly pulled the net out of the water. I examined my catch. It was quite a big fish about the same size as a shoe. I took the matches, the tin and the notebook out of the rucksack. I ripped out a few empty pages from the notebook and set them on fire using the matches, I then swiftly dropped them in the tin so as not to burn my hands. Next, I carefully placed the fish onto the tin so it wasn't touching the flames. My stomach rumbled at the sight of food. 'Finally,' I thought, "something to eat.'

As I was finishing my dinner, my feet in the water, watching the sea, I spotted a small white speck in the distance. It slowly bobbed closer until I could almost touch it. It was a pillow. I reached out to grab it, but I fell into the water. The water was freezing cold and it chilled me to the bone. I speedily snatched the pillow out of the water and swam back to the raft. As I lay down onto the flimsy rubber floor of the raft I noticed some golden embroidery on the pillow. "M.S Merrigold" I read out loud. All at once my vision blurred. I was in a bedroom, the bed was made nicely and the floor looked clean. Suddenly a loud buzzer rang above my head and a woman, the same woman from the other memory, came running in with the boy.

"Come on Christopher," he yelled. I ran out of the room just before a violent wave caused the bed to slam straight into the wall. One of the pillows had landed near my feet, and on it was the same inscription, M.S Merrigold.

A loud honking sound woke me up in the raft the next morning. My eyes slowly fluttered open to reveal a busy cityscape. Oh my god, I thought, this was it, I wasn't stranded anymore. I stood up swiftly and packed all my stuff in the rucksack, swinging it over my shoulder. I could see more and more people gathering to watch me in the distance. This is the moment, I thought, soon I'll be in a warm bed, reading a book or watching TV. The raft was quickly getting closer and closer to the shore. I heard them talking, things like "someone help," or "quick it's a boy." The raft had made quick progress and was now only a few meters away from the street.

I prepared myself to soon be rescued, but suddenly there was a loud pop and a low hissing noise. The raft had hit a rock and was deflating. Oh no no no no no, I thought, I need to jump. I immediately went to the back of the raft. Then, taking big steps I ran to the edge of the raft and jumped. I flew in the air, but I had jumped just short of the street and I plummeted down, smashing my head against the edge of the sidewalk. I felt myself sink into the darkness of the water and then everything went pitch, black.

I woke up in a hospital bed, my head throbbing with pain and my right arm and left leg in a cast. Outside my room, lots of people, doctors, social workers and some people who looked like the press. "Aah!" I grunted as my entire body shook with pain as I turned onto my side. Briskly, I saw one of the doctors, a woman, turn and walk toward the door. The door made a loud slamming sound as she entered, her long black hair swaying as she sat down in a chair next to my bed.

"You're awake!" she exclaimed flashing a friendly smile, "you hit your head pretty hard, didn't you?"

I started to nod, but the pain stopped me.

"You should be fine here," she said pointing at my bed. "Hi, I'm Dr. Rowe."

"Hi," I croaked, my voice feeling thin, inside my throat. "I think my name is Christopher"

"Well," said Dr. Rowe "Christopher, your ship, the MS Merrigold, sunk a few days ago while you were on vacation, we are yet to find your parents. Also a social worker has found some people you can stay with until we find your parents, she'll be here to talk to you soon."

"Thank you," I croaked, meaning it with every ounce of my being.

"Well, I should probably leave you to rest then," she said "I'll come back later, call for me if you need me."

"Bye," I said waving, but then regretting it right after.

I was finally safe. I was on land. I sighed and then slowly, I drifted back to sleep.

Hanna Le Han Mao is from China. She is in the 4th Grade at the Bonn International School. Her hobbies include reading, drawing, watching movies and making cakes.



DREAM

As your eyes close and your breathing slows,
You hop on a beautiful train which leads you to a magical, enchanted land.
You step down on a cloud,
and think, "Is this actually true?"
Your breathing stops, and your eyes pop open.
Shock is what you feel.
Ladies dance in purple dresses,
while they laugh and talk to each other.
And ribbons twirl in their hair.
They fly over rainbows,
They fly over streams.
They dance on and on...
Forever, it seems.
You can ride on a star,
You can float on water.
And wherever you are, you always feel happy.
Then you hear the sound of piano,
it says you'll have to go.
So you wake up with the sunrise,
and your heart is filled with joy.

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THERE WAS ONCE A GIRL CALLED KATE

There was once a girl called Kate,
Who was always late,
She was late for the bus to school,
and went to the teachers office for breaking the rule.
Oh poor Kate!

IF I COULD BE A TREE

If I could be a tree
I would
let flowers bloom on my branches
and bear sweet, ripe fruits
let children climb on me
and sit on my branches
be a shelter for picnics
with different kinds of food and sweet
be a place where birds can make nest
to give birth to little birds and hear them sing
I would
If I could be a tree

Antara Gopalan is thirteen years old. She is from England and India. Antara likes to read, draw and paint, and gymnastics.



SUNFLOWER

I'm a bright yellow sunflower,
Always loyal to the sun,
Searching through this world to find a bright ray

POSITIVE ENERGY

And through all the negative energy
I found yours, your positive energy

DROWNING OUT THE SADNESS

I'm drowning out the sadness.
In the loud music,
And in small doodles

WHAT DO YOU DO

What do you do when the one constant,
The one thing that makes sense,
The one thing that's always there,
Disappears

Liliane Brusa aged twelve years is from Italy and England. She likes to play volleyball, watch comedy movies, and read poetry.



I WATCHED

I watched you as you walked away.
I watched you walk until I couldn't see you anymore.
I watched as I put my hands over my mouth to stop from crying out.
I watched you walk right out of my life after I stayed while you tore me apart.
I watched until I couldn't anymore and walked away like you did to me.
But this time it wasn't my choice.

SOMETIMES IN LIFE

Sometimes in life you don't get what you want so you find something better.
Sometimes in life things don't end up the way you want them to, so you pretend they didn't happen.
Sometimes in life you can lose people so you pretend you never knew them.
Sometimes in life you can give someone your whole heart and they throw it away so you have to learn to love yourself and hope that's enough.

Elise Carey-McGibney, twelve years old, is a first year pupil in Mounthawk Secondary School, Tralee. She was twice runner up in the Trocaire/Poetry Ireland Competition, in 2015 and 2016 and won first place with her poem 'The Sea of Hope' in 2018. She also won joint second place in 2016 at Listowel Writers' Week in 2016 with her poem 'Magpie'. Elise enjoys art, birdwatching, baking and writing short stories.



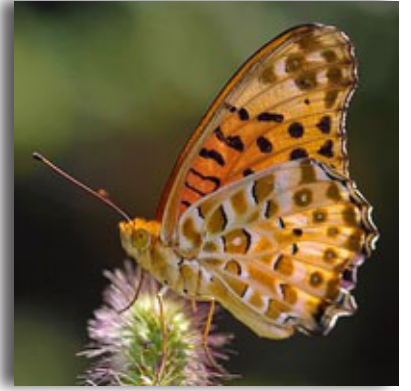
WINTER'S MAGIC

Melting fangs of ice
hang from barren branches.
Squirrels crouch
as ducks peck at a frozen lake
with their bills of hope.

The huddled, fluffy ducklings
watch their mother
fail to break the ice.
My cold feet
numb in my boots.

My breath floats into
the icy air,
like a dragon's puffs
asleep in his lair.
The silent day
grows dark and old,
while new icicles form
glittery and cold.

Ella Skye Hackney is nine years old and lives in New York with her parents and dog Owen. She loves ice skating, creating graphic novels, and political activism. She wrote "Standing Up" after attending the Women's March in NYC.



STANDING UP

I think it's cool when boys
stand up for girls
even when the girls
are the ones being hurt,

when friends stand up for friends
who are facing
really big bullies,

when Americans stand up
for immigrants
who want a better life
for their babies,

when we all stand up
to protect the Earth.

We are all part of this one world.
Shouldn't we stand together?

Rebecca O'Neill is nine years old. She lives in Skerries, North County Dublin, with her father and mother and her dog Argo. She loves to read and writes regularly also.



Photograph of Argo courtesy Rebecca O'Neill.

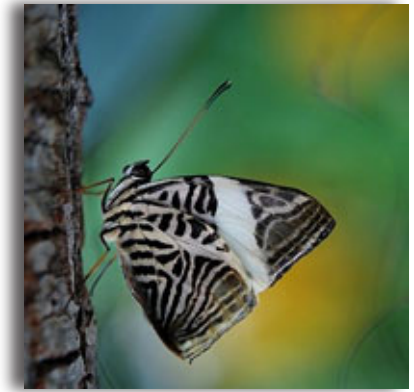
ARGO

When I take you out
I see your smile,
It makes me happy
To see you happy.

When I'm in the darkness
All alone, you come
Along with your bone
Dancing running, and jumping too!

I feel at home alone with you.

Mae Browner is eight years old and lives in Greystones, County Wicklow, Ireland, with her Mum, Dad, two brothers, and Lucky, her Jack Russell terrier. She is in Miss Trihy's third class in St. Kevin's primary school with her friends, Sara and Aoife, and her hobbies are hip-hop dancing and reading Tom Gates and Big Nate books. Her favourite band is Chasing Abbey



EXCITED ED!

Hi, this is Ed. He's just watching TV right now, but soon you'll see him not watching TV! Ed's parents aren't home right now so his aunty is minding him. Ed doesn't know why his aunty is minding him or where his parents are.

But secretly Ed's aunty is minding him because his parents are going to be on the Lotto show, Winning Streak. Today's Saturday so the big movie will be on but half way through they will show the people who are going to be on Winning Streak. It's a surprise, so Ed's aunty doesn't want Ed to see this ad.

Finally, Ed gets fed up with just watching kid shows, so he decides to go outside. He plays on the slide and the swings and jumps on the trampoline, then he has to go in for dinner. Ed eats his dinner so fast that he is just in time for the big movie but the bad thing is, Ed's tummy hurts.

"Oh no!" says his aunty.

Since Ed's tummy hurts, his aunty lets him watch the big movie but what Ed's aunty has forgot is that half way through, his parents will be on TV when the Lotto show turns on.

And when Ed sees his Mum and Dad on TV, a monster is released. "EEEEKK, WHOO! I'm gonna be SO RICH. I'm GONNA BE SO RICH. I'M GONNA BE SO ...!"

But Ed's aunty interrupts him. "We-ell they may not win," she says.

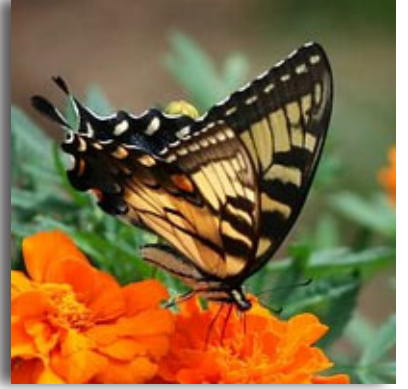
"Yeah. Yeah." Ed jumps up and down. "They will. They will." He flaps his hands. "You just, you just, you just don't believe in Mummy and Daddy," Ed shouts. "You just don't believe that one of them is gonna spin the wheel of fortune and they are gonna win!"

"I do but, but, but . . ."

But, it turns out Ed is right. His Dad gets to spin the wheel. When Winning Streak is over, Ed's aunty stares at the TV screen. She nods her head and looks at the score. "Your parents have won," she tells Ed.

"YOO HOO," he screams. "YES I KNEW IT. WHOO YEAH! OH MY GOD. NO WAY. YEAH WHOO!" says Excited Ed.

Teagan Parry is a thirteen year old girl from Merseyside. She is a funny, spirited and conscientious young lady who is maturing quickly. Teagan loves to explore new ways to express herself, and was encouraged to write *A House on Fire* by her father after an intense friendship turned sour.

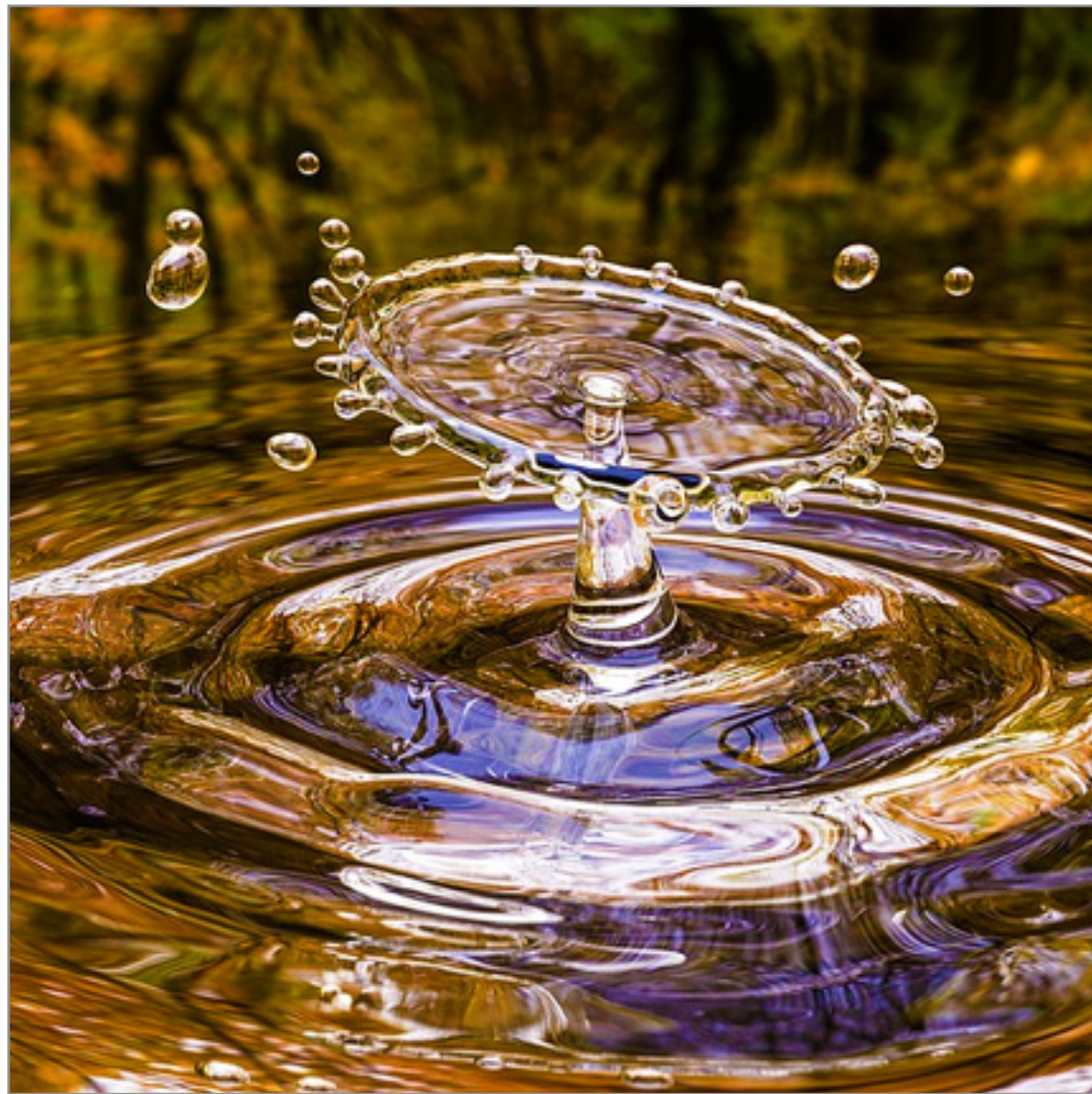


A HOUSE ON FIRE

I once had a friend
who was like dynamite,
she required deft handling because
one wrong move and she would explode
with a forest green jealousy.
She blinded me with abuse
and laughed
until I hid and cried.

Then one day I found the strength to step
out of her shadow
and I began to sparkle.

My name is Eva Domenica Modly de Jira Hurst, I was born in Tunis, Tunisia in 2004 and I have lived in Korea and Turkey and I am currently living in Germany. I am Hungarian-American but my mother tongue is English and I have a large family extending from America to Sicily. I have a passion for horror novels, gothic literature, word play and philosophical discussions. I love poetry and have experimented with many different types such as rhyming or freeform. I also have other passions in music, science and humanities but I love all forms of literature.



THE REPERTOIRE OF THE DOLEFUL

10.11.18

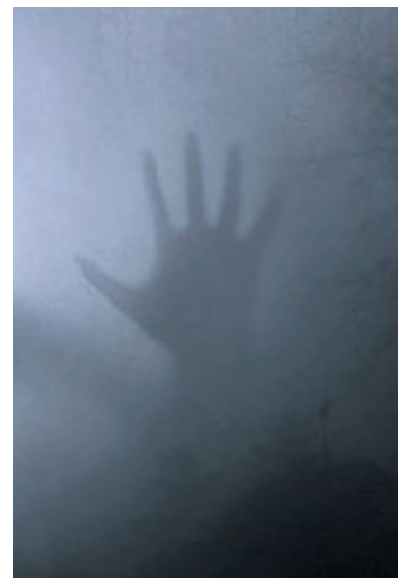
I have a secret everyone knows,
 But like a breeze it comes and goes,
 Like a drop of water, it will fade,
 Leaving behind a blotchy shade,
 True for some but not for me,
 Thinking, pensive patiently,
 For my lovely, bedewed flower,
 As I sit and ponder after hours,
 Must this be? And why? How so?
 Must morning rays melt the fallen snow?
 No-matter the object of my affection,
 All must aby this grim reflection,
 Their joyful bouts of imperfection,
 But I care not for their completion,
 A hundred stare as my eyes meet,
 Redundantly at their repeat,
 My gaze matching their disbelief,
 At my apathic ears and escape of grief,
 And I stand alone, polished and faded,
 As passersby mistake my marble as jaded,
 And as they chase it away it darts,
 Why so eager to break your heart?

DEAR ANXIETY

7.11.18

Why must you torture me so?
 Is it something I did, I honestly don't know?
 Sorry to interrupt your scheduling but you have them,
 You just pop up whenever especially during my REM,
 By the way my sleep thanks you for taking their shift,
 But I don't! And your creating bigger rifts,
 Between me and my friends, you always speak for me,
 I stutter and massacre words so much my language is gory,
 You're the ultimate emo, black, edgy-edge overlord,
 Is there a reason you're doing this, or are you just board?
 My morality's mixed, my logic is nixed and I still need to find ego's body,
 My stabilities rationed my sleeps on vacation and my overall confidents shoddy.
 So, let up a bit, if you could go away faster,
 I could avoid my mind's mental, misery movie massacre,
 Cause everyone in my mind is a mess,
 I'm losing my sanity, ego and rest,
 I tried to fire you but it didn't work,
 There's no way to hide from the places you lurk,
 I'd like to say I've lost you but you're still on my shoulder,
 And every day I grow, I get older and older,
 I am truly glad that you're keeping me safe,
 But my logic is murderous and fear is misplaced,
 Honestly, I already figured I'm crazy,
 You keep me from getting to happy or lazy,
 But right now, you're just making me fear, oh dear,

So dear acute anxiety,
 You're not that cute anxiety,
 Your sobriety,
 Is dead to me,
 And lied to me,
 Your tantrum, teasing, topples, totals teens,
 Rule of thumb all you'll ever be is mean,
 And between my obscene mind mess in widescreen,
 You make ego preen, and envy green,
 My personality doesn't need practicality it needs,
 Emotional factuality, vitality,
 Obviation,
 Is not your obligation,
 You are not my mortification,
 And frustration,
 Puts you on probation,
 I must ration my patience,
 To make the declaration,
 Through my narration,
 Notation, restation, consideration,
 And valedictation,
 Sayonara, Ciao, Bye-Bye, we're through,
 P.S It's not me it's you.



A TALE OF TWO KINGS

10.11.18

As I sat I spied a pool,
 It's water, clear and smooth and cool,
 Two tiny figures I did see,
 Two black ants fighting viciously,
 A winding, binding spiraling thread,
 Tangles them, but up ahead,
 Is a spiraling, darkened, looming hole,
 As revenge is sweet but has a tole,
 It's too late when the danger they find,
 Their petty wars' run out of time,
 And fear dilutes their sheltered brains,
 The thread has bound they can't refrain,
 And they go gushing down the drain.

FIREWORKS

11.11.18

Bang! There it goes again,
 A fizzing down my arm to my pen,
 And from the ink's black pool bled,
 Drips into blues and bloody reds,
 No time to continue, and I must wait,
 For the shining figure to illuminate,
 And so, it begins, the azure design,
 I see the edges, faces, lines,
 But alas these vivacious, bubbly sparks,
 Have faded out against the dark.

WORDS TO BE SAID

12.11.18

A stuffed toy bursting at the seams,
 A fantastic tale, the stuff of dreams,
 An unwatched sinking, slowly filling with water,
 And steam leaks into my mind ever growing hotter,
 The largest words melt on my tongue,
 My eyes are blank and mind is rung,
 It drips out my ears, a runny leak,
 As tensions rise and reach their peak,
 I want to speak, what should I say?
 Instead outcome jumbled words like child's play,
 As my brain is dripping down my arm,
 To the caustic, angry, unappeasable alarm,
 Then the ground shakes as I scream,
 The fantastic tale and stuff of dreams,
 But all of this remains in vain,
 Drowned in lightning, thunder and rain,
 Words are broken, burnt and bent,
 And meaning lost in the livid torrent.



RESISTANCE

13.11.18

The air turned to ice darkness and filled the room,
With the smothering smog of hopeless gloom,
The girl tried to run, to laugh, to hide,
But the ice and dark came from deep inside,
Inky liquid rose to her chin,
And hands grabbed her to drag her in,
It filled her mouth, her throat was marred,
Blood was frozen, lungs were tarred,
She sank and sank could not swim,
And vowed to never let them win,
Finally, under, almost drowned,
Her world twisted upside-down,
And she lay gasping on the ground.

HOPE LESS

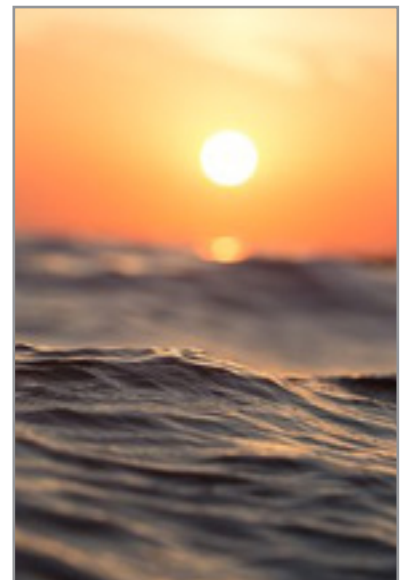
13.11.18

The delicate figure sits alone,
Has gone away,
Since yesterday,
And fled in a flock of doves,

Where has she gone?
I never know,
Where else she goes,
Down with the pastel dawn?

For those who find,
Their reason and rhyme,
Their place in time
Gain peace of mind,

To reflect, I try,
Now I'm alone,
With thoughts overthrown,
And attempt to satisfy,
And wonder why you aren't here.



THE VOICES IN MY HEAD

17.11.18

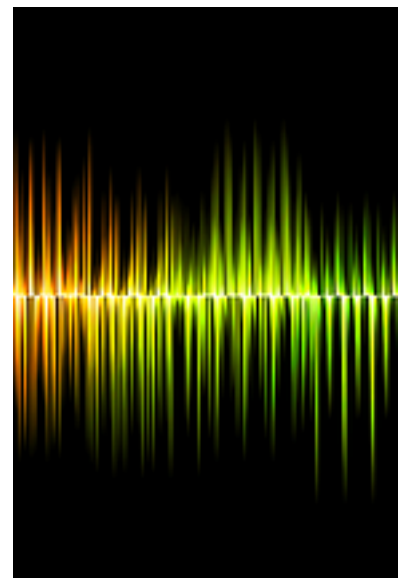
Two in one and one is me,
Vocals, voiceless aimlessly,
Wander, wonder in my mind,
Echoing like church bell chimes,
A thousand patterns drip and splat,
Across my mind like tiny rats,
And some cry, some sing, some laugh,
But like a paper torn in half,
A single voice out of the chorus line,
I guess the loudest voice is mine.

SCHOLASTIC VIEWS

26.11.18

What?
How?
Why?
And why again?

There is no ending.
No logic to logic.
No reason for reason.
And to consume. To move.
Don't stop.
Can't stop.
If I stop...
No. I can't think to think when I think.
I hear fireworks.
I see everything.
And nothing.
And something.
And understand as much.
And chase the serpent's tail.
To consume myself to gain.



TINY CLAY BEADS

13.11.18

Tiny clay beads that roll and clink,
On cheap, white string, but yet you link,
With muted, glazed earthy shades,
And feel your textured, glassed suede,
And while your simple, lonely beads,
Your form's a facile comfort to me,
But silky, milky, pure white thread,
Has turned a bloody, rippling red,
And by the time I had awoke,
My clinking linking beads had broke,
Lay

on scattered
the
ashen oak.

MARY MADE A MISTAKE

27.11.18

Mary made a mistake.
A great, big, terrible mistake.
And everyone saw her.

Then she started to cry,
Big, fat, snotty tears.
And everyone saw her.

She ran outside,
Panting, whiny, whimpering breaths.
And everyone saw her.

I don't care if it was small.
I don't care if it doesn't happen again.
I don't care if she feels bad.
I don't care if she fixes it.

Mary made a mistake.

and

everyone

saw

her.



OIL IS TO WATER

23.11.18

Garrulous. Their voices fill the room. Their whimsy and ignorance as repugnant to me as rotten animus. And I am to them as oil is to water.
We clash, we expel, I doubt that any of them could even consider me as a precursor to their arrogance. And I am to them as oil is to water.
Precocious, their ego and folly only goad me to continue to belay. And I am to them as oil is to water.
So clear, so pure, so plain. And yet I shine in a multitude of colors, beautiful, Delphic. And I am to them as oil is to water.
And yet, they form, they change into icy towers and light graces them in the splendor of others. They are necessary and I am repugnant. And I am to them as oil is to water. And I fear the day their confusion turns to fear and hate. It always does. Then I will not shine, I will rot into darkness but remain present in consciousness. And I am to them as oil is to water.
Useless, slimy oil.

THROUGH THE SHUTTER

29.11.18

I spy an eye,
Lying, prying,
Down the street,
Black as peat,
Red as flames,
Filled with shame,
Through the curtains,
Like Tim Burton,
Slowly stalking,
Spindly walking,
Up the stairs,
And past nightmares,
Then whispers leer,
Beside your ear,
Hear the mutters,
Through the shutters.



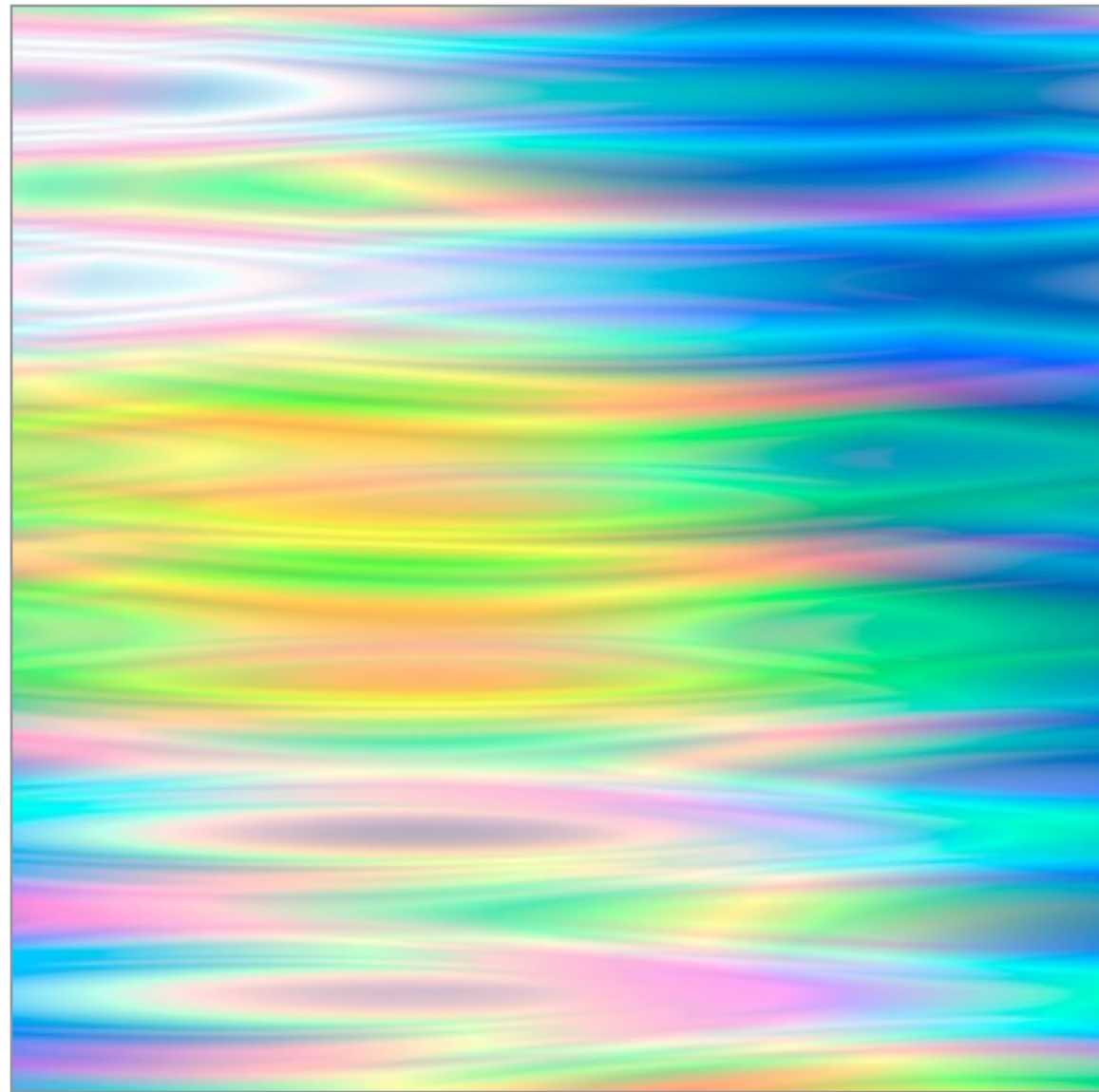
Amedeo, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



NATURE

The sun was as shiny as the
Light
And on the floor
Was ice
The trees were
Moving slowly
It seemed so
Lonely and quiet

Ferdi, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



THE ICE

The sun was bright and the floor was icy
The sun made the ice shine
It looked like a shiny diamond
With sun shining through
Making rainbow colors in the ice

Beatrise, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



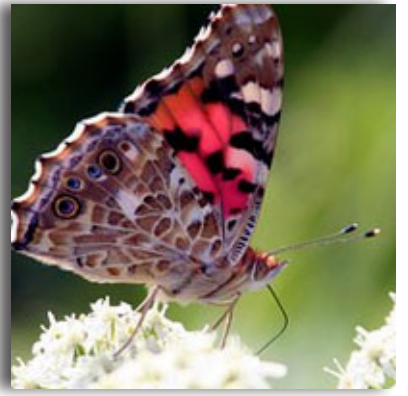
WINTER HAS COME

Winter has come, Winter has come,
The leaves are falling down and down.
Everything is covered with an icy frost
and we have a private ice rink on the block.

Winter has come, Winter has come,
Snowman friends will grow and grow.
Until spring will enter
And melt the frost and flowers will grow

Winter is gone, Winter is gone
Spring has invaded and we all run

Bartek, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.

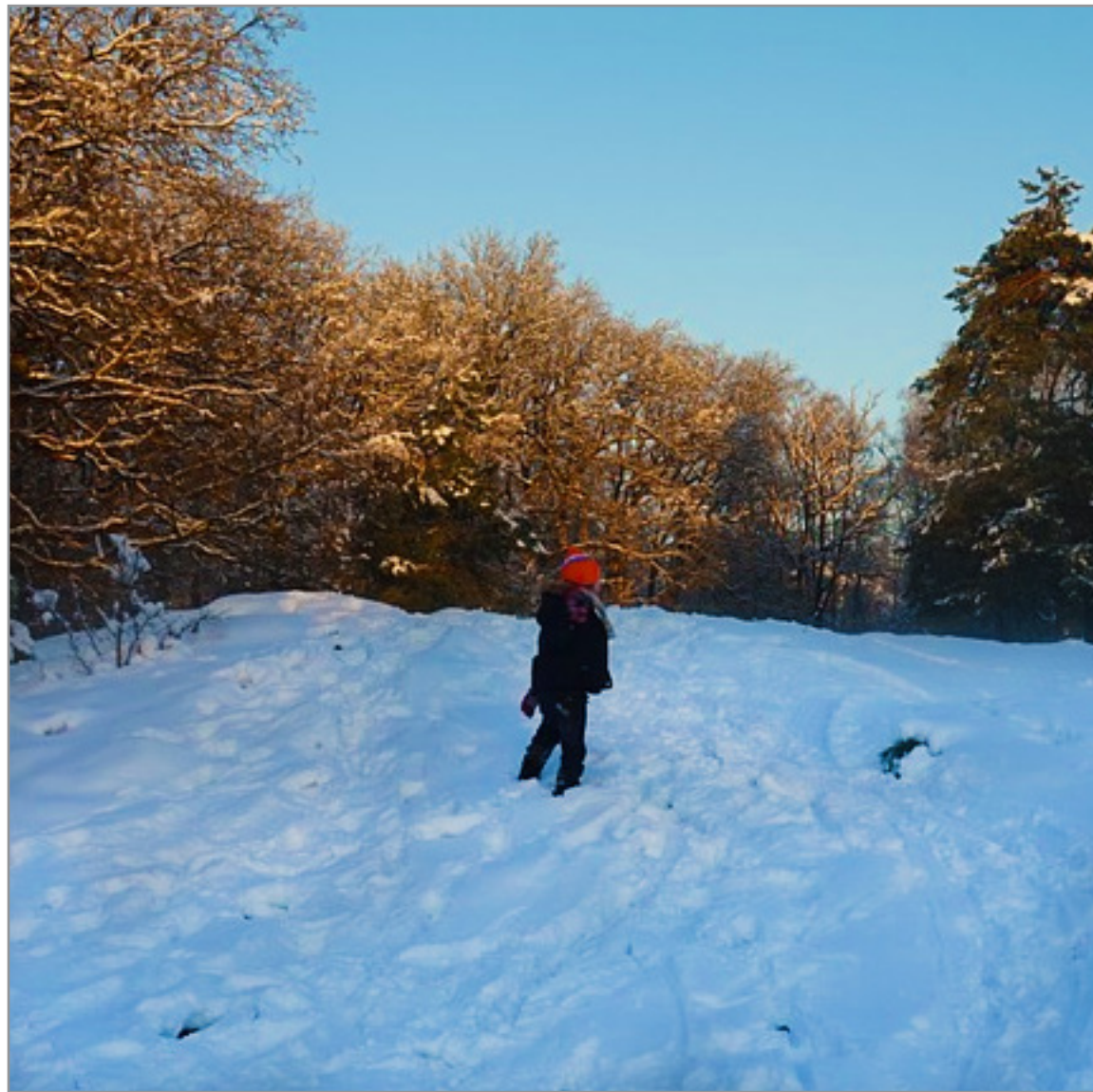


ICE

Ice, ice freezing all over
the place.

Ice ice
changing the state from
liquid to solid,
making the leaves white.
Ice, ice, cold and colder
melting and freezing
changing the state
from this to that...

Sophia, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



I FREEZE

The icy sounds of the Winter breeze,
I seriously Freeze!
I freeze I freeze,
And run through the crunchy leaves.
The sunset, the moon
And the stars,
The terrible winter breeze,
All I can say is: I FREEZE !!!

Annabel, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



FROST

Everything was freezing,
I was freezing,
There was silence everywhere,
As the sun shone,
I heard my feet go,
Crunch,crunch,crunch.
My cheeks were red,
My hands were ice,
As frost spat on my face.
But the thing that kept me warm,
Was the warmth of my chilly hat.

Maja, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



BUNNIES

Bunnies bunnies in the dark of night
Watching water turn to ice,
No more water just cold food, in
Need they wait till 10:10 and till then no warmth just cold and dark like at
The start.

Keshav, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



WINTER IN HAMBURG

The wind blows,
the leaves fall and hurt themselves.
The snow blows everywhere,
but not inside.
Beautiful plants
don't get to be seen in the cold
shining snow,
and the wind loud and strong.
Summer's sun
and heat go away in October,
November, December and January.

Oscar, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.

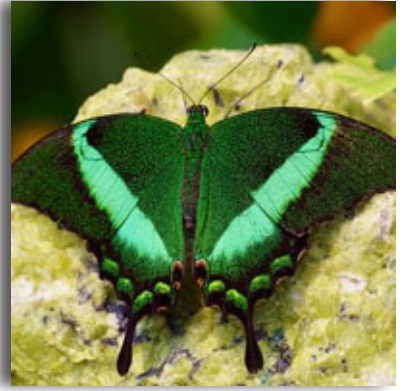


IT'S SO COLD

Ice Ice go roll the dice
Snow Snow I'm on the go
Cold Cold the sun's still gold
Frost Frost there is no cost
Grey Grey it's an ugly day
Gold Gold it's so cold



Jan, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



BUNNIES

Bunnies are as beautiful as the edge of the galaxy
How pretty the bunnies are
Beautiful as the sunset
The bunnies are so beautiful you can barely look at them
All they have is hay
They curl into a ball right next to each other.

Nick, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.

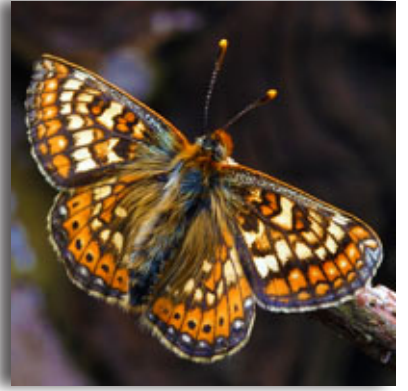


LEAVES AND TREES

The trees are flowing left to right.
Leaves are falling down like a kite
Birds are flying tree to tree and branch to branch, never to see a kite
No trees with leaves, all gone to see a bee.
Fresh air is scared of the strong strong wind.



Euan, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



WHAT I SEE IN A HAMBURG MORNING

The sun glitters like cheddar cheese
and the frost is a
Massage to my feet.
The wind flows like a little elf
and the trees swing like monsters.
The trunks are like statues.
The sand melts into my feet
Like mud.
The leaves are like raindrops
And the clouds are like rice.
The sky is like an ocean
And the sound of the trees
Are as sweet as blueberry
Muffins.

Lilly, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



OUTSIDE

Fresh air, blowing in my face.
The leaves are frozen,
they look like crystals.
The sun is low and shining bright,
I thought it was a big, huge light.
My breath is turning into ice,
I scratched my head like I had lice.
An airplane flies
through an only blue sky.
So when I stepped inside,
I felt so warm and so relieved.

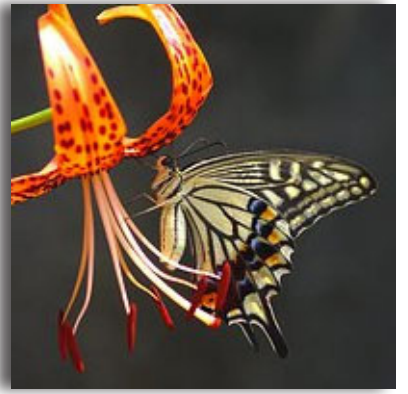
Zoe, 'Grade 4, International School of Hamburg.



FROST

The wind is blowing and it is snowing.
The bench is frozen and so are the leaves.
Believe it or not, so are the trees.
It was freezing and people were skiing.
Some people were still sleeping.
The sky was blue and so were my shoes.
Everyone was freezing and some people were sneezing.

Cathal Casey is aged four. Brother to Saoirse and Aoife, he attends Naionra an Chuilínn, Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15. He lives in Clonee, Dublin 15. He loves Batman, including the 1960s show. He likes to draw and has a very wide vocabulary as his poem attests.



SOME WORDS A FOUR YEAR OLD BOY KNOWS (AS HE SAID THEM)

Plate. Fork. Chicken nugget. 7-Up. Cup. Chip. Milk. Water.
Brown sauce. Red Sauce. Santa hat. Elf. Coffee.
Table. Snow Globe. Blue Reindeer. House. Grass.
Witches. Wizards. Cats. Frog. Moon. Face. Chair. Bag.
Box. Birdie. Broken Glass. Table-cloth. Drawer. Vase.
Fries. Milséan*. Tissue. Knife. Light. Red berries. Paper. Sink.
Bush. Carrots. Tag. Pen. Hand. Chainsaw. Car. Man with a car.
Back of the car. Racing car. Police. Monster. Candle. Cat.
Birdie. TV. Pillow. Bed. Speeding. Shoe. New Shoes.
Broomstick. Penguins. Simpsons. Horsey. Masterpiece.
Gaymaster. Gaymaster mask that lights up. Lids. Bag.
Ducks. Card. Butter. Green. Blue. Yellow. Chalk.
Black. Big drawer. Wheels. Bat. Sky. Floor.
Picasso. Leaf. Flowers. Pancakes.

* *Irish for Sweet*

Callum Casey is eight years old and attends St Laurence's National School, Sallins, County Kildare. He loves football, both Irish and International. His favourite hobby is reading Roald Dahl books and he is also a huge fan of books by David Walliams. This is his very first ever poem to write.



TAKING PART

I played a football match.
At the end I got a penalty
And shot a goal.
It was a good goal.
We lost.
But we did our best.

Aoife Casey is aged seven. Sister to Saoirse and Cathal, she lives in Clonee, Dublin 15. She attends Gaelscoil an Chuillín, Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15 (2nd class) and her hobbies include Roald Dahl books, writing stories and she especially loves to perform on stage. She trains with Erin go Brath nursery and she is a member of Stagekidz Academy.



SLEEPY JUICE

My front tooth fell out when I was in my Granny's.
I was so happy.
Yay!

The Tooth Fairy gave me five euros.
The Tooth Fairy put my tooth away.
Yay!

Yesterday, the dentist
Pulled my back tooth.
He gave me something to numb my jaw,
Said it was Sleepy Juice.
My mouth felt weird.
But I still got five euro.
Yay!

HAPPINESS

Is when you are happy
Happiness is also when you are excited.
Happiness is the opposite of sad.
Then you are happy and excited.
Happiness is all about being happy.

Saoirse Casey is aged ten. Sister to Aoife and Cathal, she lives in Clonee, Dublin 15. Her interests include singing, scripting and producing short stories for her YouTube using her LPS and animation. She also likes to draw. She plays football and camogie for Erin go Bragh GAA Club and she attends Gaelscoil an Chuillín in Tyrrelstown, Dublin 15 (5th class).



MOONLIGHT

The moon.
How it shines so bright
In the night.
Ho Ho Ho.

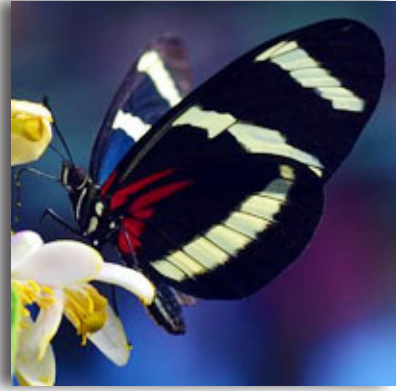
The jolly man comes tonight
Cookies. And milk
Like the moonlight.

How it shines.
So bright
Tonight.

WINTER AFTERNOON

Rain
Cold Air
Icy Sky
Wet leaves
Paper roses
On the pavement.

Ava is a Year 8 student in Melbourne, Australia. She enjoys learning in general and has a particular interest in IT. She is part of her school's netball club and learns tennis and gymnastics outside of school. This poem was inspired by her visit to the Rigg Design Prize exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria.



UTOPIAN DYSTOPIA

Perfect

A word formerly used
to describe the world
we used to live in.
A world where
tomorrow was just a dream
and today was all that mattered.
A world where we had infinite time
to explore the stars
that littered the sky
and were free
to do whatever we wanted.

Now,
the time slips away from us.
We look up at the empty sky
and we realise
that world was
nothing but a dream.
It was not perfect.
It was far from it.
It was a place where the day's end
was not a dream.
Tomorrow was real
and always it always arrived.
That old world was
simply dysfunctional.
It was not compatible
with the real world.
The real world was a place
where nothing was perfect.

Cheryl is a Year 8 student in Melbourne, Australia.



DURIAN

They say he's rough around the edges.
Prickly, intimidating, scary and tough,
so they do not touch him.
Mrs DePlum finds him revolting.
Some think that his stench is quite confronting,
His l'odeur de parfum is an undesirable whiff.
So they do not approach him.

Anyone near him is,
ostracised.
Awarded a badge of association,
so you avoid him.

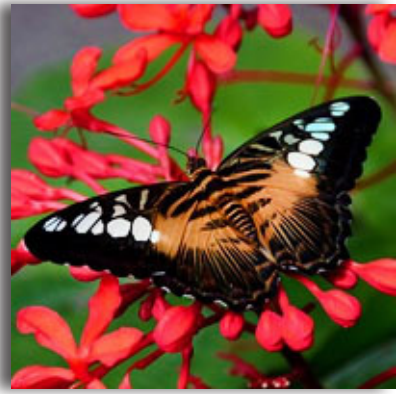
I wonder,
why we fear individuality,
judging things which should be celebrated.
Perhaps an outstretched hand,
would make the impossible possible?

An extended arm,
a chance offered,
to the discriminated.

I easily discover beauty within.
A soft, appealing character,
one whom no one would have known,
if nobody had been willing to take a chance,
the opportunity for a beautiful, unique and fruitful friendship.

They say to never judge a book by its cover,
but they make assumptions based on the outward appearance,
will they learn that to truly accept oneself,
one must accept others?

Jenny is a Year 8 student in Melbourne, Australia.



THE ME YOU DON'T SEE

Me,
The me you see,
A white box, A plain exterior,
An unstained white piece of paper,
Exterior of innocence.
A decoration,
Placed on a pedestal made of glass.
You'll treat me like
A foul, An ignorant child,
A bird kept in a cage with great expectations.

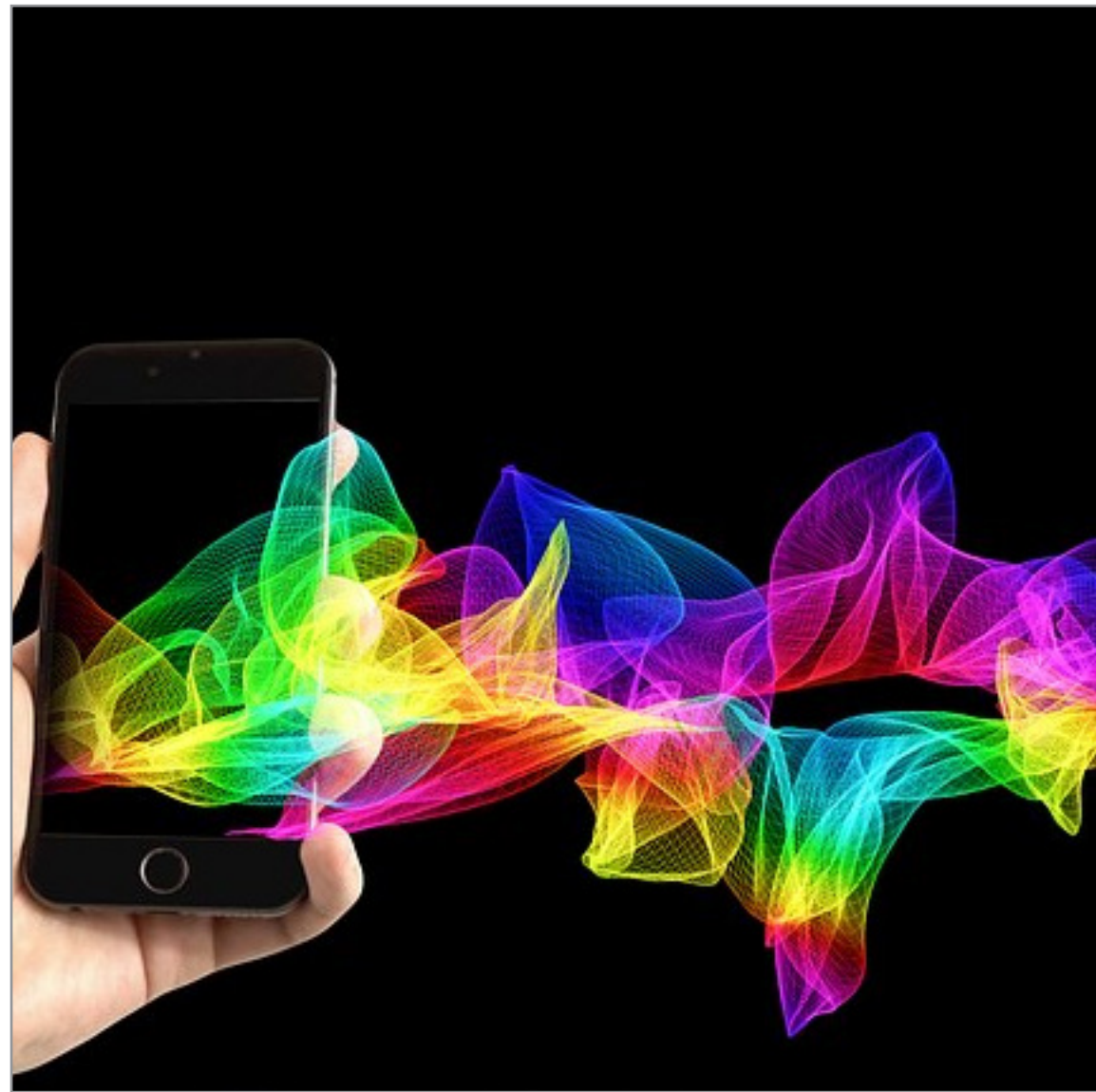
The me you see,
Smiles and laughter,
A happiness that reeks
Of sunshine and flowers,
the naivety of an adolescent idiot.
The me you see,
An Asian girl,
With the same hair,
The same eyes,
The same look, Like everyone else.

The things that you don't see,
Behind the black eyes,
Underneath the black hair,
Buried 6 feet under ,
A heart locked away,
Broken and bruised,
Tense on the verge
Of breaking into a million pieces.
In the world that you don't see,
The nightmares,

The hallucinations,
Eating away my will to live,
My determination to see another day,
The grotesque figures,
Their touch,
Fire burning through my skin like paper.
Their voice,
Slowly eroding my brain like acid.
A symphony of ridicule and mockery.
Flooding into my brain,

Like a dam that has opened its gates.
Ravaging through my head,
Until I can no longer stand,
The guilt, anxiety and depression
Upon my shoulders.
Succumbing to the weight,
As it pushes me down
Into jeopardy,
Silently suffocating,
The me you don't see.

Sarah is a year 8 student in Melbourne, Australia. She likes playing piano and double bass, as well as writing poetry. Her favourite series is *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams. This short collection of poems is inspired by a visit to the Rigg Design Prize exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria.



THE PHONE

A powerful little device,
So small it can fit in your hand,
Its usage sometimes considered a vice,
But it connects us throughout the land.

Some images are bright,
Causing a brief moment of cheer,
Other images, just might,
Add to our world full of fear.

A place where we consume ideas,
A world of hope and joys,
However this sometimes disappears,
To a world of fake news and ploys.

We can talk to anyone, anywhere,
In our darkest times, in desperation,
Although this can lead to more despair,
Due to the miscommunication.

So give a cheer for the revolutionary object,
Shout for joy that we have the phone,
But may I just interject,
That we have never felt so alone.

PEN

This object so simple and so small,
Is the one which makes change capable,
This item is used by all,
Yet sits humbly on your table.

This object has changed humanity,
It writes the laws,
It is suppose to create a better society,
Constantly opening and closing doors.

The pen writes stories and anecdotes,
Tales of joy and woe,
As well as inspirational quotes,
Causing us to make friends of foes.

This object unleashes the power,
Writers have within themselves,
Injustices and inequalities cower,
From this little object found on shelves.

So do not underestimate,
But give it new ideas to pursue,
As whilst it could exterminate,
It could also give the world great virtue.

THE BED

Look to the corner, and you will see,
A place of restoration,
Enter it and you will be,
In the world of dreams and imagination.

A place of safety and security,
A place to relax and restore,
To be able to attain peace and tranquility,
A good sleep is at the core.

A home simply is,
A place to rest,
A place to escape a crisis,
And the bed does this best.

All need a bed,
No matter wealth or age,
Even in death we rest our head,
Seen in life at every stage.

And so I ask you,
Can it not be said?
That there is no one who,
Could go without a bed.



THE TABLE

Whilst it might not at first come to mind,
When considering an object of importance,
The table is the only of its kind,
So on this small list has the most relevance.

Why is the table so important?
Because it is where we meet with others,
And anyone with a brain that is competent,
Knows to spend time with sisters and brothers.

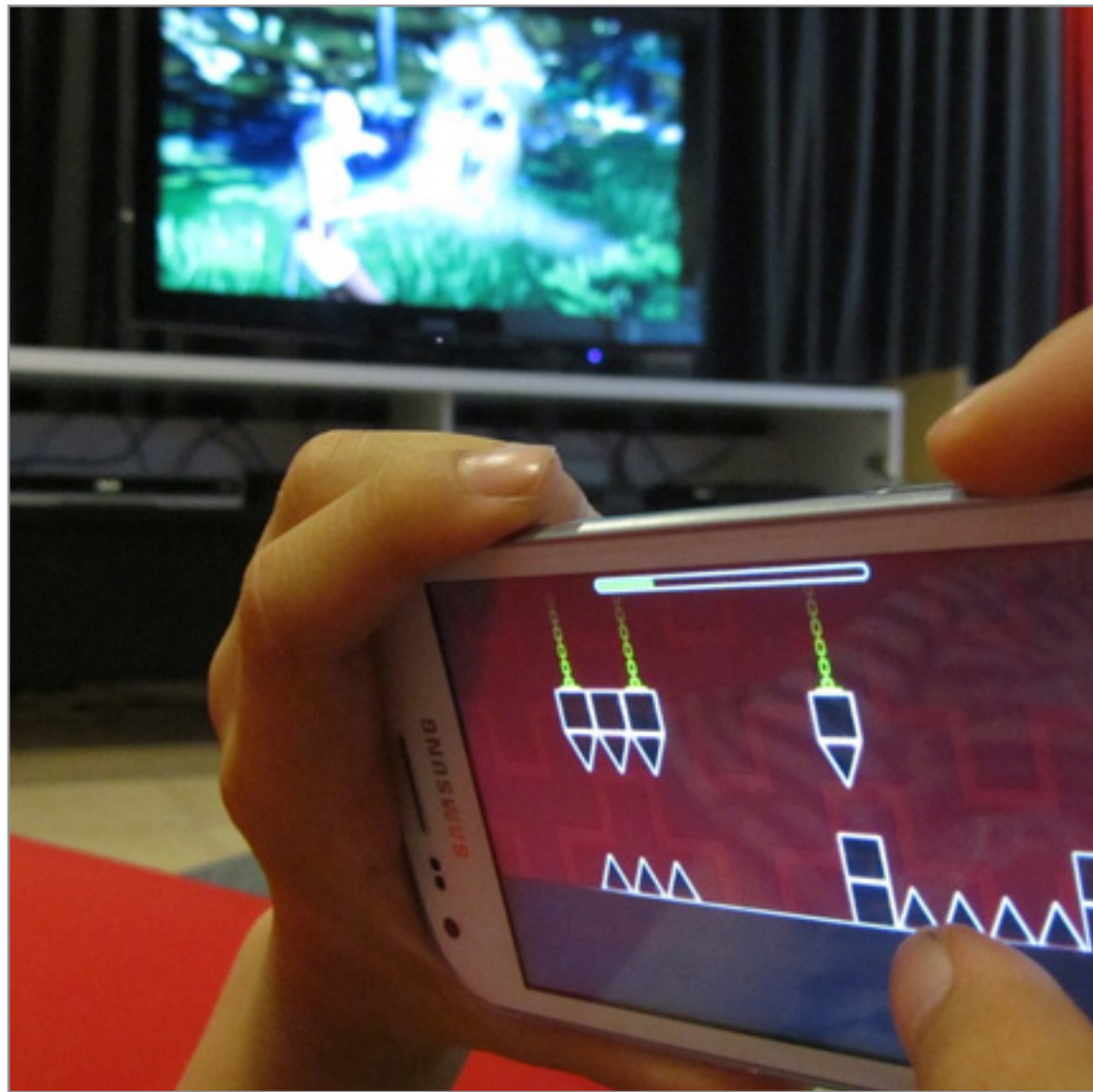
A place where we communicate,
Sharing stories of grief and joy,
Where together we can create,
Although sometimes we destroy.

It is where our foundations are built,
Here we gather, rest and feast,
We share our sorrow and guilt,
And plan to destroy the beast.

Our world is full of distaste,
But together we are able,
To forge a better place,
As discussions make things changeable,
Hence, the significance of the table.



Shalev Cohen is twelve years old. He is from Israel. Shalev is in the 7th grade. His hobbies are reading and playing volleyball.



LIFE IS NOT A PHOTO

Social media affects our life
we always check our phone to see if we got a like,
we never spend time together,
and “poof” our life passes,
start playing, talking, don’t be shy,
you miss a lot when you check the social media all day,
instead of going to the real life,
our life is not like a photo that we can go back and delete,
if you miss your life that’s it!
Start sharing, and posting my poem, you will thank me later, I promise you will.
I hope you all understood my message and remember don’t let the social media
change your life, be the one to change it

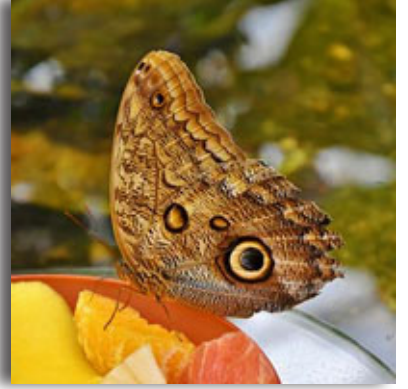
Hello my name is Ivo Toulouse. I am thirteen years old and I am French. I was born in Latvia, and both my parents are French.



OUR TIME

When I open my eyes I see
I see the reality of the world we live in
The negativity spreading through our lives
Life is short seconds are counted
Our time.....wasted
Think about when you were younger
The toys you played with, the lego you built
Instagram, facebook, snapchat, twitter
Spending your childhood... in front of a computer
You are better
You are stronger
Change your mind
Because you are building your future

My name is Miuccia Schmid, I am twelve years old. I am from Germany and live in Hamburg.



ILLUSION

People on their phones everywhere you look.
Phones, pinging everywhere you go.
People caring only about likes.
Girls, girls at our age finding themselves ugly,
Because of insta models.
Can't you see?
We have to change something,
something that makes us less like robots.
We are trapped in a world that is just an illusion,
like santa clause.
Please start to make a change.
Just one word could help!

Sørensen Madsen is eleven years. He is from Sweden. Sørensen is in the 7th grade. His hobbies are playing computer games.



SHOULD TRICK-OR-TREATING BE ILLEGAL FOR PEOPLE ABOVE THE AGE OF 16?

I don't really know if trick-or-treating should be illegal for kids aged sixteen and above. As it does provide some with an excuse to vandalise and to not follow the law. However, many teenagers may have other reasons why they are out trick-or-treating. Maybe they are out with their siblings.

But a problem with the law is that the Police Force will have to have more police officers on the street and the police station may not have enough funding for that. However from what I have heard, the police already have "undercover" policemen/women on patrol so the law may give the police more power to enforce and punish people who break the law.

All that depends on what the rules of the law actually are. Is it only illegal if teenagers ask for candy? Or if they are dressed up? Or if their face is covered? What are the actual limits of the law? Because if the law is vague it can be abused.

People will always be scared of something. Last year it was "Killer Clowns." The year before that it was razor blades in candy and apples. People were afraid of razor blades but there weren't actually any accounts of candy with razor blades in so I think the main reason people are afraid of small things is because it is to do with their children.

For example, in my town, people from 12 grade went on a "clown hunt" because 14 different kids had seen a "killer clown." But I think it was more for fun and something to do, perhaps they were just bored. And I don't think it is going to help because boys/girls will be boys/girls. I also don't think teenagers trick-or-treating is the problem. The kids in Chicago who damaged those cars, i don't think that trick-or-treating made them go insane. But I have to admit that Halloween makes "bad eggs" go out and have fun because it is a good way not to be caught as it is pretty hard for the police to find the person who smashed your window when it could be any kid in town.

In the end I think the law has its own pros and cons.

A collaborative Short Story by children in a Dublin School, Second Class, Castleknock Educate Together National School as part of a Myths, Legends and Fairytale Teacher/Artist Project. These students represent many cultural backgrounds: *Lauren, Roisin, Saoirse, Ollive, Emma, Suzie, Dara, Tahreem, Liam, Will, Francesco, Maciej, Maaz, Anne Marie, Gavin, Maya C, Luke, Loachim, Kristofer, Erin, Alex, Noah, Conor.*



Illustration by Dublin Schoolchildren

THE BLUE REINDEER

It was the night before Christmas. Santa went out to the reindeer enclosure near his North Pole dwelling. His eight reindeers were all there, excitement was in the air. But wait! As he drew near the enclosure Santa couldn't believe his eyes. One of the reindeer, his very best reindeer, the one he was relying on to bring his sleigh all over the world, was a different colour than the others. Rudolph, his very best reindeer was now blue. An electric shade of blue. Santa almost froze with shock. He could feel the blood draining from his body. He threw his hands in the air and exclaimed: "Oh my...what will I do now? How can this be? Please Rudolph, please tell me what happened". The big jolly man suddenly looked as if he had shrunk.

Santa begged and pleaded but Rudolph continued to hang his head, not knowing what to say. Rudolph had always been much shyer than all the other reindeers but when his nose glowed, the skies lit up all over the mountains and valleys and Santa could see clearly his way to all the children in all the world. Seeing how Santa was so affected by what was happening, the other reindeers quickly gathered round him and they blew out their breaths in clouds of warm air. They were trying to heat Santa. Normally, Santa was such a jolly fellow and always felt warm but tonight, on Christmas Eve, he was feeling an icy chill. Rudolph continued to look at Santa with big sorrowful eyes. Rudolph's eyes were blue as his skin which now gave off an eerie glow in the near darkness. He seemed about to say something "Please...Santa...I..." but that's as far as he could go. It was as if he couldn't get the words out.

"Have you eaten blueberries?" Santa asked. Santa frowned, struggling to find the answer to this terrible event that was happening. And so near to take-off too! Santa's eyebrows which were thick and soft as cotton wool shot upwards and disappeared into his pixie shaped hat.

"No, it wasn't blueberries". A small voice from the back of the pack spoke out. It was Vixen, a beautiful fawn coloured reindeer and one of Rudolph's closest friends.

"Tell me all you know", Santa said and beckoned Vixen to him. But Vixen then looked frightened and even though she didn't want to disobey Santa she stayed where she was, pretending she hadn't heard Santa summon her.



“Have you painted yourself blue Rudolph?” Santa persisted. “Is this some kind of joke? Prancer, did you do this? You are so vain that you were probably testing out a new colour for your coat and poor Rudolph was gullible enough to allow it. Is that it?”

All the reindeers shook their heads but Prancer shook his the most. “Santa, how could you think I would do such a thing? No way would I ever do anything to harm my friends in this way”.

“No...Okay then, perhaps it is a trick of the moonlight that has sprayed you this sky colour. Here Rudolph, move over there under the lantern near the oak tree. Let me get a closer look at you.”

Rudolph lifted up his head and looked at Santa. He was just about to speak when there was a commotion, a loud clippity cloppity noise from one of the other reindeers, Dancer.

“Oops, I’m just practising my new routine”, the very musical little reindeer said. He was called Dancer because he was light on his feet and he always wore a silver bell around his throat so that when he moved it tinkled.

“Silly reindeer”, Santa replied, shaking his head and wagging his finger at Dancer. “How can you dance at a time like this? My best reindeer is now blue, even his nose is no longer red. How on earth will he lead my sleigh tonight? Oh dear, I just don’t know what to do”.

With that, Dasher, one of the bigger reindeers who had a white crest on his back, pushed his way through the other reindeers.

“Ouch, mind your step”, said Cupid, “you big oaf. You nearly crushed my hoof. Then where would we be? I’d have to stay at home tonight and all the love I have to breathe into everyone’s chimney wouldn’t happen. Folk would be very cross all over Christmas”.

“Cupid’s right”, said Santa, “take your time Dasher, there’s no rush anywhere until we can discover what’s happened to poor Rudolph.”

“I was just going to say that I can lead your sleigh tonight. I’m twice as fast as Rudolph and all the other reindeers respect me just as much as they do him. Isn’t it time for a change?”

As soon as Dasher had spoken the other reindeers trembled. They did not trust him although they knew in their hearts that Dasher was certainly faster than any of them. Deep down they were more than a little afraid of him.

“Why are you so eager to take Rudolph’s place all of a sudden?” Santa said and a look of puzzlement came over his chubby face. “Mmmm... is there something you are not telling me Dasher?”

“I saw Dasher with the witch of the woods last week,” blurted Blixen, a normally quiet reindeer who was more often seen than heard. Blixen turned bright red when everyone turned to look at him. Then, just as quickly as the colour rushed into his cheeks, it ebbed away again.

“There’s no need to pay any attention to this upstart”, Dasher said, growing angry. ‘He’s just out to make trouble. You know he’s been always jealous of me and how quickly I can take a dangerous turn or a sharp bend.”

But Santa wasn’t quite happy with Dasher’s response. Again he looked to Rudolph who seemed even bluer than when he first saw him. Santa thought for a minute and then he asked Comet to step forward. Comet was starry-eyed and always looking towards the heavens. When he wasn’t grazing in the meadows or pulling Santa’s sleigh, Comet loved to study the stars and the planets. He knew every constellation and loved to trace their shape when he lay down at night in his bed made of straw. He knew he had been born under a lucky star and that was true because it was a very lucky day for him when Santa asked him to pull his sleigh with the other reindeers.

“Comet, you’ve never ever lied to me, so you haven’t?” Santa asked him.

“No, I’ve never lied to you Santa”, Comet agreed, sticking out his chest to make himself look proud. “And I never ever would” he added. “I just want everyone to be happy”.

“Then tell me all you know about this dastardly deed. How did my best reindeer come to be so blue. Electric blue. Has someone put a spell on him?”

Comet looked to the other reindeers. He pleaded to them with his eyes but they all remained silent. Rudolph, Vixen, Blitzen, Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Dasher, Donner.



“Very Well, it looks like we’re not going anywhere tonight then,” Santa said at last. “There’s no question that anyone else could lead my sleigh only Rudolph. He’s been doing it for centuries and it just wouldn’t be the same”.

There was a sharp intake of breath. Everyone was horrified at the thought of not delivering the parcels that the elves had made all year long. All the work they put into making dreams come true would now be wasted. The elves had gone to every corner of the land to find the parts they needed to make sure all the toys the children asked for got made. “Not flying tonight. Impossible!” all the reindeers said together. But Santa was a very wise man and he knew what he was doing. Rudolph spoke up at last, at first in a whisper but then his voice grew stronger.

“It was Dasher...he made me eat carrots that the witch of the woods had prepared. There was an invisible potion on them and then when I ate them I turned blue. Dasher didn’t tell me the carrots were going to make me blue. He just said they were tasty and that more than likely they’d make my nose glow even brighter if I ate them.” After he had spoken, Rudolph trembled.

“Is this true Dasher?” Santa asked in a very cross voice. What have you got against Rudolph? He’s always been kind and fair to you and all the other reindeers. You are one big happy family or so I thought. Now, thanks to you, there will be no trip around the world tonight”.

“I’m so sorry Santa. I really am. I didn’t mean for this to get out of hand. I just wanted to lead your sleigh. Just once. I’m sure I can persuade the witch to give me the antidote for the magic carrots. Just once, can you please let me guide your sleigh?”

“Dasher. I know you are the fastest of the reindeers but you being near the back means that you know how to take the bends that myself and Rudolph cannot see. Don’t you know that your part in guiding the sleigh is every bit as important as Rudolph’s. But now, after what you’ve done...I don’t know if I can ever trust you again.”

Santa was near to tears. Dasher felt even more sad and his heart felt it was breaking. If only he hadn’t gone to the woods and met that wicked witch. If only he hadn’t told her his secret ambition, to guide the sleigh. The witch, called Astoria, was only too willing to give him the magic carrots. Dasher could still see her evil face and her black teeth when she smiled. But he’d been so overcome with his own desire to lead the reindeers that he’d taken the carrots and now, here they were in this terrible fix.

“And what may I ask did Astoria demand of you to earn the magic carrots?” Santa asked. “If I know that witch, she will have wanted something in return”.

Dasher hung his head in shame and his shoulders slumped. He looked old, nothing like the strong reindeer he was. “She just wanted to ruin Christmas. The thought of children all over the world not receiving their presents for being good was reward enough for her.”

Santa took on the expression he did when he was deep in thought. He sat on the stump of a tree and folded his arms. The reindeers knew not to interrupt his thoughts. It was how he looked when he was going through the Book of Good Deeds to see which children had behave all year and which hadn’t. When a half an hour had passed, the reindeers grew restless. They knew that take-off time was fast approaching and they weren’t sure what was happening. Would they be flying out over the land as usual or would all the children all over the world be disappointed?

At last, Santa rose, approached Rudolph and said, “Rudolph, I’m going to wipe your nose with the cloth I use to clean the windows of the houses so I can look in and make sure the children are all asleep. Santa’s cloth could cut through ice and snow on any glass and if Jack Frost had made icicles the cloth would melt them.

“But Santa, that’s your very special cloth. What will you do if it becomes blue too? And worse, what will you do if the paint won’t come off and you’ll have wasted your special cloth for nothing.”

“Let me worry about that. I know someone who will go to the clear brook that’s just beyond the hill yonder to rinse the cloth. The water in that brook has magical powers too. Not for reindeers or humans but for cloths. ” Santa looked at Dasher and it was clear that Dasher would be the reindeer chosen to fly to the brook to clean the cloth.

Santa walked over to Rudolph and unfolded a scrap of what looked like a clump of silk. It was white as snow and it smelled of roses. It was so white that it dazzled all the reindeers and they had to look away. Rudolph closed his eyes and wished and wished with all his heart that the special cloth would wipe away the blue on his nose.

Santa very gently wiped at Rudolph’s nose and little by little, the glorious red bulb that shone so brightly began to emerge. The other reindeers cheered loud they were so happy. Rudolph’s nose was like a beacon in the night. It burned brighter than any fire any of them had ever seen.

“Please forgive me Santa and Rudolph” Dasher said and there was genuine regret in his voice. “I’ve been foolish, thinking I wasn’t important when Santa has made me realise that each and every one of us is needed in our way to pull the sleigh. Can you ever forgive me?”

Santa smiled and it was the biggest, widest smile the reindeers had ever seen. It was so big and so wide that it made them all feel happy inside and even though they were still annoyed with Dasher for what he had done, they just couldn’t stay mad for too long.

“Here, take this cloth to the brook and make sure every bit of blue dye is rinsed out. Then Dasher, come back here and we’ll fly like the wind with all the presents. There’s still plenty of time because as you know, I have the power to stop time. How else do you think I can get around the world in one night?” Santa laughed and his belly shook like jelly.

Dasher took the cloth and was gone in a flash. He vowed he would never do anything again to hurt Santa or the other reindeers. Now that Rudolph’s nose was glowing again, it was as if the world was lit up once more. Dasher vowed he would be extra kind to Rudolph from then on.

“What about the rest of me being blue? Will that be okay?” Rudolph said, still not fully convinced that he would be leading the sleigh.

“My dear Rudolph, your colour has nothing got to do with your ability to light the way for my sleigh. You are as bright as ever and when we’ve done our job tonight, we’ll go in search of the antidote! But only if you want to. Who knows, you might quite like being blue!”

When Dasher returned, Santa’s special cloth was as fresh as ever. Santa put it into his pocket and beckoned to the reindeers to take their places. Dasher hung back, not sure if he had been forgiven but Santa looked at him kindly and said,

“I hope you have learned your lesson now come on, take your place, that bend on Mountain number three doesn’t get any smoother with the passing centuries”.

When everyone was ready he looked at his reindeers and he was beaming with pure joy. This was Santa’s very favourite time of the year and every year it was as exciting as ever. Now Rudolph, Vixen, Blitzen, Dancer, Prancer, now Dasher, now Cupid, now Comet...off we go into this Christmas Eve...off we go...ho ho ho. Merry Christmas to all, Merry Christmas to all”.



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