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POETRY & WRITING

Children's Edition

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
MARCH 2019

EILEEN CASEY

presents

The Mouths of Babes

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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View from an airplane, flight to Bali, Indonesia.

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I live in South Dublin and I write poetry, prose and non-fiction. I've published collections of poetry and prose and I work as a creative writing facilitator. My small press, Fiery Arrow, publishes community type publications. In 2018, Fiery Arrow published 'The Lea-Green Down' a response anthology to the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh. I work with adults and children and am included on Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools Panel. I received Arts Council bursaries, South Dublin County Council and Offaly County Council Bursaries. A Hennessy Award Winner (Fiction), I was also awarded a Katherine and Patrick Kavanagh Fellowship.

EILEEN CASEY

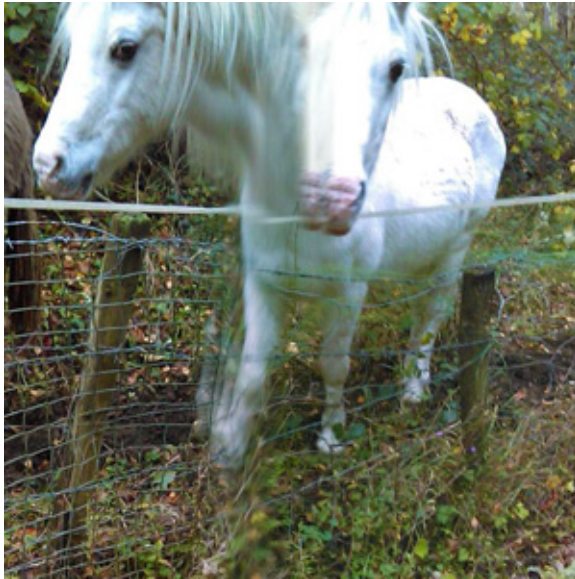
Guest Editorial

THE MOUTHS OF BABES

*"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength?"
(From the King James Bible, Psalm 8:2).*

I go to summer schools, writing workshops, readings, theatre performances, cinema, music recitals. Indeed, anywhere I can find creative sustenance. I never forget however, that the best source of creativity is my 'inner child'. My age resemble the bark of a tree, all those rings for passing years, different shades bleeding each to each. Or a Babushka doll, the very smallest one, my core being, is my inner child. I think of her in a leafy glade, surrounded by sunlight, running water nearby, always ready to conjure from her imagination the most fantastical words and images.

I'm not alone in this way of thinking. I once heard poet Paul Muldoon being interviewed. The great man seemed relaxed, like a Sumo Warrior after battle – as anyone who has language on the ropes should be. His eyes were full of mischief too, this truant from Professorships or whatever it is a Pulitzer Prize winning poet does when not listening to Chuck Berry, Cole Porter or not writing poetry. Muldoon is always trying to find the child inside himself. Indeed, he often tells the story about a competition he judged (for adults and children) which was won by an eight year old boy. Muldoon said he chose that poem (about a turtle) because of the word 'movay', how the child described the movements of the turtle. I'm sure there were a few adult sensibilities greatly wounded when the provenance of the winning poet was revealed but there it stands. A word that could only be written from the mind of a child had won the day.



Percy Bysshe Shelley regarded poets as “the best legislators in the world’. That so, then children are the wisest legislators, thus the saying “out of the mouths of babes.” Ask a child what something looks, tastes, sounds, smells, feels like and you’ll get a stunning reply. “My arm’s gone fizzy” (pins and needles), “you smell of swan” or “Nana, the sun has no shadow” (on a hot day). Metaphor and simile fall from them like a harvest of linguistic treasures. Skipping forward in time from Shelley, the great musician Yehudi Menuhin once made the point that when a child reaches the age of reason, a shadow seems to fall over creativity. He says that society forces the child to hide those wonderful and unique ways of describing the world for fear of seeming foolish. Peer pressure too can play a part. Wanting to appear tough and invincible often doesn’t sit with simply saying “I love to write poetry”.

Fortunately, there is so much support for writing in Irish schools today. Organisations such as Poetry Ireland (Writers in Schools Panel, Trocaire Poetry Competition among others) together with a relatively new initiative; TAP (Teacher Artist Partnership). Luckily, I participated on a training course for TAP and then subsequently, went on to facilitate two groups of second class students in Castleknock Educate Together National School. Teachers there couldn’t be more helpful and I was delighted to see the amount of effort that goes into literacy and creativity. I also should have said in my opening that working with children and being around them in general is a sure fire way to awaken the inner child. For a number of weeks, we explored myths, legends and fairytales, narratives which allow for all sorts of transformations and spell-binding events. These narratives are a very good place to start when ‘creative warriors are weak’ or where children are a little wary of exposing their true colours. There’s nothing quite so liberating as being able to invent myth or fairytale. Those *One day....or Once upon a time....* openings are useful, familiar devices but once the poem or the story is completed, then that scaffolding can be taken away. There are some really useful books around also. Library shelves are full to the brim with wonders but just published is *Mythical Irish Beasts*, written and beautifully illustrated by Mark Joyce (Currach Books). These stories have an Irish flavour but echoes are found in global stories. The swan appears frequently in narratives from around the world, never more poignantly as in The Children of Lir. The long collaborative poem resulting from this myth appeared in a recent *Live Encounters* edition. Joyce’s book contains stories which are short and lyrical, perfect for reading out in class rooms where holding the attention is premium. We worked on a series of ‘How to be’ poems also, a doorway to dreaming but in a practical, ‘do-able’ way.



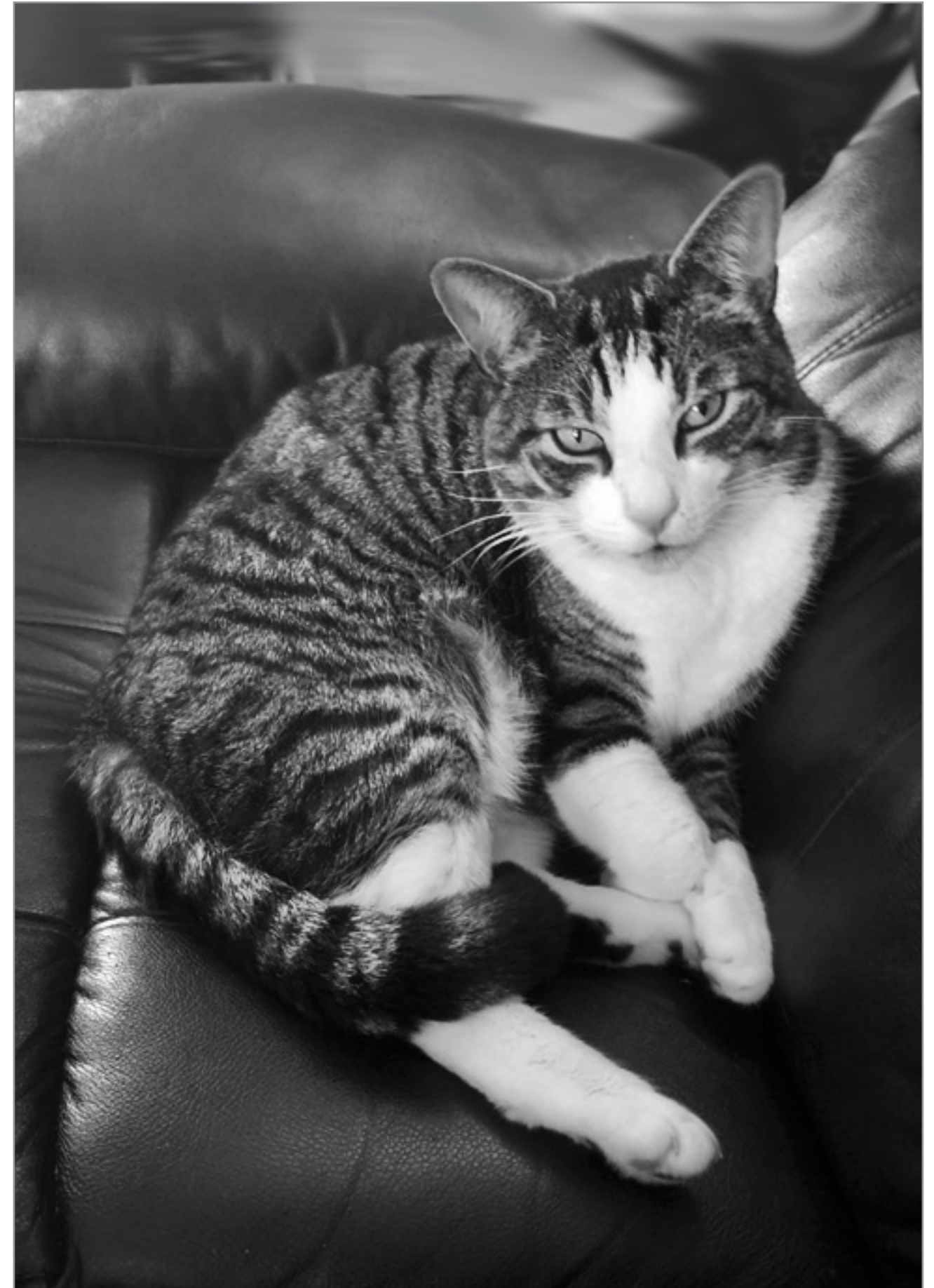
Over the weeks, I tried to bring in an ‘ordinary magic’ section showing the children that startling things can happen, often in the least expected places. I stressed the importance of paying attention, making those connections when everything falls into place and presto! A new way of self-expression is born. The children already knew about ‘listening ears’ (a phrase used by Pat, one of the children’s teachers) but we also need our ‘magnifying eyes’ ready to perceive objects and settings in new ways. I showed the children three photographs taken over the last few months (my camera is a notebook just as powerful as a journal). One of the photographs is of a horse with two heads (polycephaly is the correct term), a beautiful white horse I encountered while staying at The Writer’s Cabin in Westport. Mílis is her name (the Irish word for sugar). A friendly beast, I gave her an apple each morning which she cleanly chopped in two neat halves, crunching one and keeping the other for ‘later’. I took a photograph of Mílis before I left and, as luck would have it, she swayed ever so slightly just as the shutter clicked. The resulting image gifted me a mythological animal, my beautiful two-headed white horse, luminous as the steeds that carried Oisín to Tir na Nóg. Two-headed animals are common in mythology as indeed, three headed and multi-headed ones are also. Cerebus, the dog guarding Hades for example, or in the story of Hydra from Greek myth.

The second photograph is of a tree trunk with an indent like an eye. The tree, close up, looks exactly like a crocodile. Roughly textured ‘skin’ is conveyed in layers of scaly bark but it’s the ‘eye’ that clinches it. Showing children one thing and transforming it to something else is a wonderful way of introducing metaphor and simile. Children have no fear when it comes to making extraordinary comparisons and when it’s happening in a group environment, imaginations are fierce and words become like acrobats, one tumbling over the other, standing on each other’s’ shoulders until the most splendid imagery begins to emerge. Once children have tangible evidence before them (they can indeed be like Doubting Thomas), the sky’s the limit. Children are fierce interrogators. They’ll explore all the evidence, tear it down and build it up again. But that’s what makes children great with concepts.

The third photograph is my own personal favourite. The children named my ‘character’ *Mac the Maggot*...a close up (magnified quite significantly) of a maggot, a glorious image of such ‘horrific grandeur’. This little ‘Mac’ even has horns and is quite simply the most fascinating creature I’ve ever seen. The world is a wondrous place and working with children opens a lot of windows onto this world.

While *Mac the Maggot* brought groans of disgust from the children, they too couldn't help but be enthralled. Mac gave me the perfect opportunity to talk about 'shrinking and enlarging' common themes in books such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. And of course, no working with children would be complete without mentioning the family pet, in my case, my beautiful tabby cat 'Carl' (the name he came with from the DSPCA). Carl, a rescue cat has lived with us for over five years and whenever possible, he forms part of my storytelling encounters. Animals have a special place in mythology, legend and fairytale and they evoke happy childhood memories. The family pet is privy to many secrets, hidden desires and ambitions. One night I noticed that Carl's tail had thickened like a brush and was standing straight up in the air. I soon learned the reason. Although now used to a life of luxury and comfort, Carl still had 'warrior' instincts and wasn't averse to a neighbourhood brawl or two with the local champions. Thus, the thickening of his tail to make himself look bigger and more fierce. The perfect way to describe Cuchulainn's pre-battle frenzy or indeed, The Incredible Hulk when transforming. There, I bet you've smiled at this, your inner child coming out to play as your own creative sources are awakened.

I'd like to acknowledge CETNS, both the children and their teachers, Poetry Ireland and also, South Dublin County Council who supported my application to work with TAP. A huge thank you to Mark Ulyseas who continues to provide a platform for young writers, ensuring their work reaches a global readership.



Carl, the warrior. Photograph Eileen Casey

A collaborative by children in Second Class, Castleknock Educate Together National School, Dublin - *Adam, Aoife, Arthur, Ashkan, Cian, Conor, Daniel, Deen, Dina, Ella, Eve, Filips, Finn, Isabelle, Kajetan, Magdalena, Maisy Fae, Maya, Saman, Sara, Sarah, Sofia, Stefan, Taariq, Ted, Umiya, Zainab.*



Photograph Pixabay.com

MOON POEM (I)

The moon is wanderfull. It smells like a dusty desert
Tastes like a beetroot or coconut. Or candy-cane.
Feels like sand or snow.
It's an asteroid, it soaks up the fog. It's a sponge.
A giant marshmallow
It's quiet on the moon.

MOON POEM (II)

Shine bright at night
With beautiful light
Lovely sight....
It's the moon, lovely moon
At night. Smells like stars
Shining bright.
Looks like stars in the night
Shining bright.

There is a human upon that moon
Lovely human upon that lovely moon.

MOON POEM (III)

A Cyclops in the sky
A one-eyed monster.
There is a crown of stars
Above the moon,
A sea of gold below.

MOON POEM (IV)

I'm on the moon
I see the full eclipse
Looks like white clouds
Passing over its face
If you touch it
It feels like a soft rock.
I heard the moon crumbling
It felt like an explosion
Of powder,
An avalanche of moon.

MOON POEM (V)

I like the blood moon.
It feels like slime,
Tastes like a storm.
It's a spotlight dancing in the night.
Is it looking at me or
Am I look at it?
It smells like an eraser,
It's like being at school
Only there's no teacher.
I'm on my own
I write my name on the moon.

MOON POEM (VI)

I arrived on the moon at 6 am.
I jumped around. It was soft and springy.
I was happy.

It's very dusty, full of craters.
Silence, just silence
No wind.
Fifty year old footprints
From the moon landing,
Smells of chalk,
Freezing cold at night
Roasting in daylight.

I took out my catapult
And I catapulted myself home.

MOON POEM (VII)

Grey trees grow. The ground is white,
Grey and white, a wolf moon.
It snowed on the moon,
I heard the wolf cry
His cry shattered the silence.



IVAN ON THE MOON

In the year of the pig
A herd of swine lived in beside the Boyne
One day Ivan, the biggest and the strongest
He ate of the salmon of knowledge
One of the three bad wolves
Was so enraged that instead of blowing the house down he blew Ivan to the moon
When we look 385000 km to the moon Ivan gives us abundance!



Photograph Pixabay.com

A collaborative poem about spring, with some lines credited to certain poets
(CETNS, Dublin)



Photograph Love The Garden

WISH POEM FOR SPRING

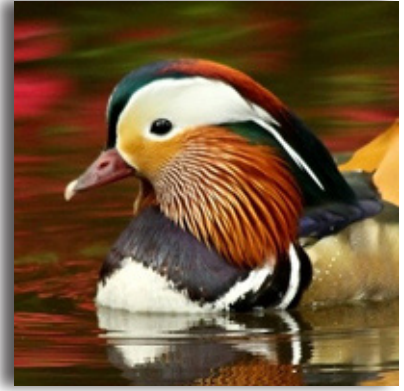
Persephone returns from the underworld
We see her in the strength of snowdrop
We hear her in the soft sound breezing through the blue bells
We scent her sweet swan smell
We feel joy for new-borns in the meadow
I'm wishing for lots of butterflies in my garden (Suzie)
I wish to understand the language of birds (Lauren)
I wish a beanstalk will grow in my garden to climb into the clouds (Will)
I wish that a rainbow rises from the pond in my garden (Maciej)

HAIKU

Mornings light shines bright
From the pond in my garden
I wish a rainbow

by Maciej

Sarah is a year 9 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. Her work was published in a previous children's edition of 'Live Encounters'.



Photograph CCTV

REFUGE FOR A DUCK

A mother forced to flee,
Safety was a necessity,
Rubbish had ruined her home,
It was hard, but she would roam,
Until she found somewhere free.

As the night turned to day,
She found utopia and wanted to stay,
The water was so clean,
The leaves were so green,
But she was unwelcome and sent away.

The lakes she could now inhabit were few,
So to a foreign pool she flew,
She layed many an egg,
"A better life for them", she'd beg,
Promising the world once they grew.

Survival odds, slim to none,
And hard work had to be done,
A meal they could not win,
The chlorine hurt their skin,
She first lost the weakest one.

They all huddled under her wing,
"The future will be joyous", she would sing,
She'd hold them near,
Try to soothe their fear,
But in the air, sadness would ring.

Remorse fills the moonlit sky,
The last one left will soon die,
Her want for freedom turns to death,
As he draws his end-most breath,
She screams a final anguished cry.

Cassie is a Year 9 student in Melbourne, Australia. She enjoys perfectly starry nights, peanut butter and jam sandwiches and the smell of rain on hot days. She has too many favourite books to mention here because she believes that any book that leaves you blinking at the end of it must be good. She also is an avid musician, loves sport and likes to use her brain and feel satisfied with her work. This poem was inspired by a visit to the Rigg Design Prize exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. This is her first published poem.



IN THE GOLDEN ROOM

Golden days, they say
We live in the golden days
On golden soil
Flying on golden sails
In a golden room

Or is it a golden cage

Because when I look out
I don't see a golden world
I see a world without colour
Hands reaching, scraping
For even a lick of that gold

And I cannot help them

Girl, small grey child,
bleached of colour
One hand on the edge
of golden floorboards
5 fingers white with strain
But she must hold on
She must get to that gold

Too much, too hard
4 fingers
3 fingers
2 fingers
1 finger - on the lip of the golden room
Polished leather stamps
And bones crumple like paper

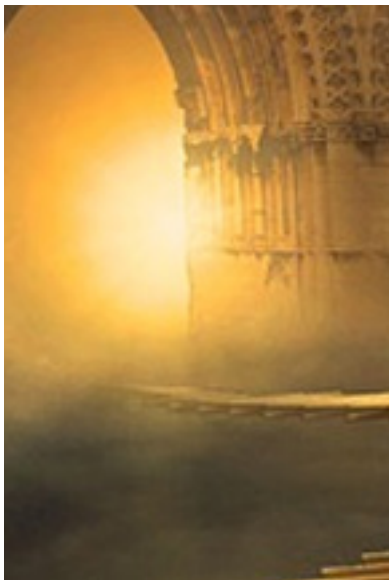
But I am in the golden room,
I have always been in the golden room
Why am I in the golden room?
When she is out there

And the girl is
f
a
l
l
i
n
g

And I can do
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
As she drifts down like
A drop of ink against the night

I pound against the glass
I throw myself against the glass
I shatter against the glass
Golden blood stains the glass

The same shade as the room behind me



Tiffany's mind is constantly blooming with thoughts. She is in Year 9 and currently resides in Melbourne, Australia, but would love to expand her list of places she has visited. When she finds spare time, Tiffany very much enjoys reading books, as well as thinking of sentimental quotes that could be used in her future writing. Her other time is usually spent practising piano and cello or training for swimming competitions. This poem was written during the summer holidays, and was inspired by the many story ideas that found themselves in Tiffany's mind.



Photograph Pixabay.com

THE MEADOW

Rolling waves of blue-green grass
where cool mist blankets the hills
and a sense of safety melts the frost;
where the sun always rises
and always returns,
flowers bloom.

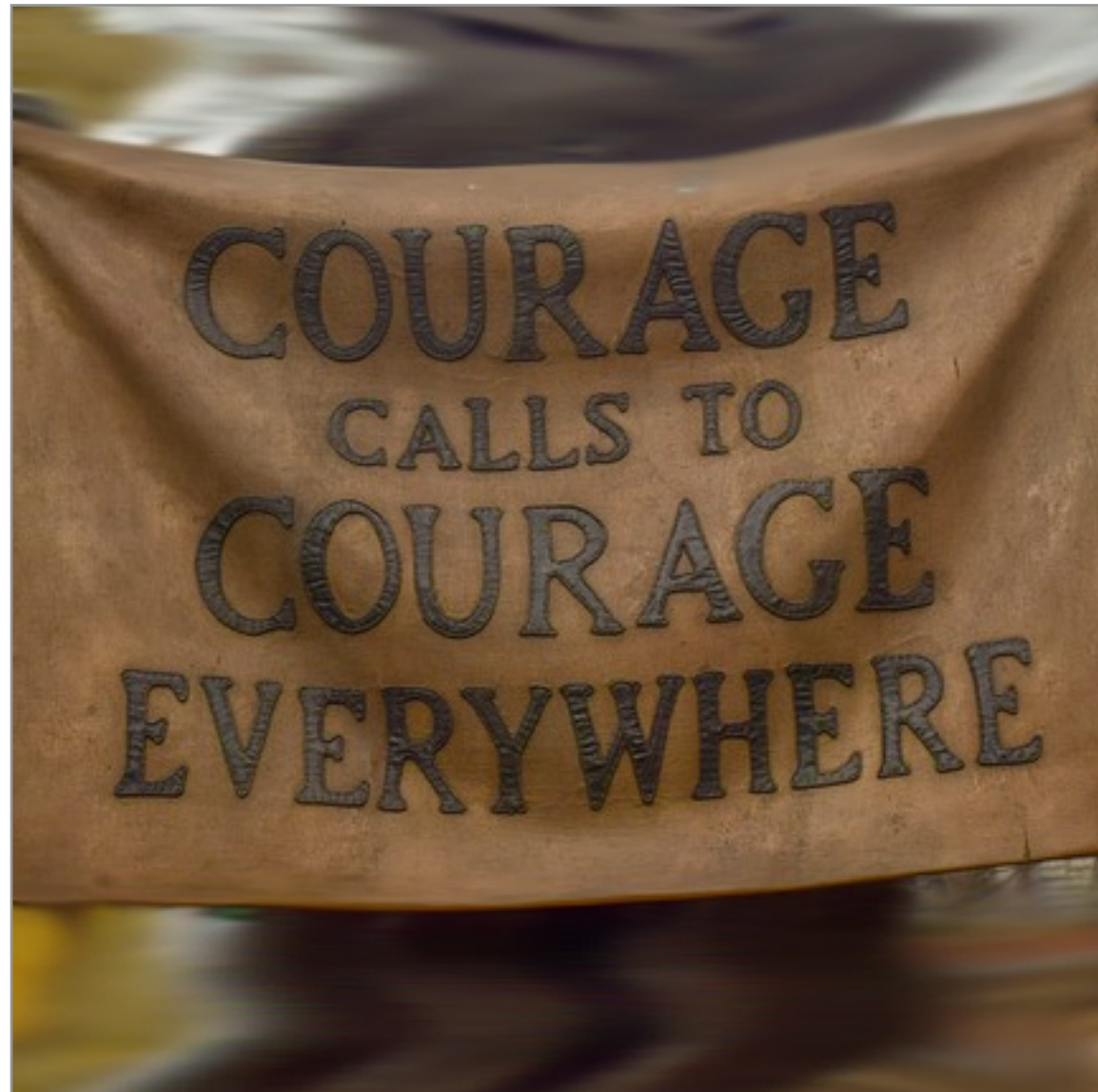
The mind is a meadow
always growing.
It receives and it gives—
as is the law of nature.

Tiny grains of lilac sand
threaded together to become
a velvet coat
enfolding the land

Each flower is a thought
its roots reaching out to other places
connecting and conceiving
even richer ideas.

In this sanctuary, there is no true death,
but a single petal may lose its breath
float away to become a distant memory
but only, temporarily.

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.



Photograph Pixabay.com

I WILL LEAD

I am not a fish
who only swims
with the school.
I am not a bird
who only flies
with the flock.
I am not a duck
who waddles after
the first person
she sees.
I can move
in any direction.
I won't be a follower,
I will lead.

Ceri is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Ceri loves sport, reading, story writing.



Photograph Pixabay.com

CYCLING SAFETY

If you are going on a trek,
Do the M check,
If your helmet is too loose,
It's no use.

Don't ignore a red light,
You can see it,
It's bright.
Drivers don't know
The way you want to go.
If you don't know the signal to turn
Ask an adult, it's easy to learn.

Don't go next to a big lorry.
Honestly you will be sorry!
Last but not least,
Stay on your lane,
If you don't want
To feel any pain.

Annie is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Annie loves art, poetry, story writing, sports.



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ROAD SAFETY

When you cross the road,
You just need to know,
Is it actually safe
for you to go?

When you cycle along
You need to concentrate
If you don't ...
you might get hit
and you will forget the date.

When you drive behind...
Behind the cyclist,
You must look for the signals
Or you might both get hit!

Abby is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Abby loves art, drawing, baking.



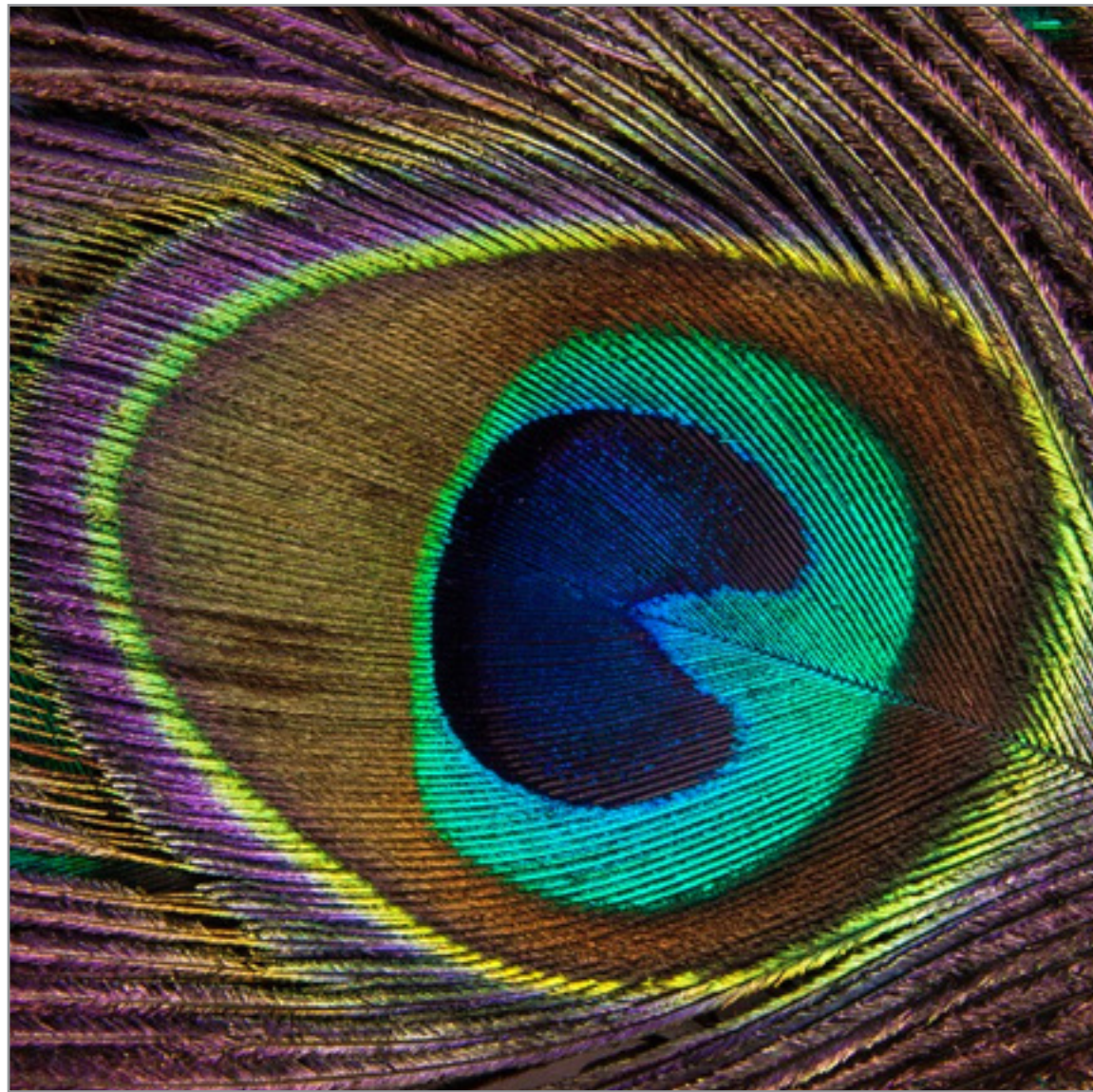
Photograph Pixabay.com

SPRING

Spring is my favourite time of year,
Flowers, birds, creatures and animals reappear.
Kisa roll down grassy hills into fields of golden daffodils.
Days are longer, nights are shorter.
All the children love to play.

Bees buzz, frogs croak, kites fly high in the sky.
Then there comes the Easter bunny, tall and fluffy.
He hides us all some eggs.
Then it is my birthday,
And, oh, what fun it is to run in the sun all day.
It is sad to see spring go
but we will have fun in summer
and all year round.

Heather is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitriona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Heather- Loves reading, drawing, helping others..



Photograph Pixabay.com

MY NAME

My name is Heather
Some call me "feather"
It's not that hurtful you see
I love to read and write too
And swim in the sea
My family is important to me far
More than money

I'm happy for whom I am
I'm not perfect as you see
But maybe not being perfect is what made me me.

We are all born some special way
Maybe not the way we want to be
But if we are kind to one another
We shall soon see
We can make a difference
You and me
We're all perfect in our own special way
Believe in yourself and all
Will be okay

Sonny is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Sonny, loves music, football, reading, joking and having fun.



Photograph Pixabay.com

POEM OF ROAD SAFETY

If you don't want to take a hike
You can always ride your bike
But remember never to do it in
November for if it snows
To heaven you definitely will go.

If you go past a red light
It might be your last
Especially if you go too fast.

Never crash or you won't be
Able to eat mash
When you forget to look
You will never read a book.

Roisín, is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Roisín likes reading, music, art, story writing



Photograph Pixabay.com

POEM OF ROAD SAFETY

We are doing a road safety cycle course in school,
I think it is kinda cool.
I did fail my outdoor test,
But I passed all the rest.

So now let me tell you something,
When you get hit it's not a fun thing,
So wear your helmet, my friend,
Because there are some things we can't mend.
And it might not be a trend,
But it could prevent the end.

Renee is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Renee, loves art, designing, cooking, gardening.



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DON'T DELAY!

Don't delay!
Be safe today!
Be sure to signal when on your way!
Don't take a chance,
You might be flattened,
I did that once...
Guess what happened !

Mark is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. He likes writing.



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CLIMATE CHANGE

The weather’s gonna change,
We are gonna get some tornados.
Get ready to get some range,
Cuz it’s gonna get strange.
Get ready for the storm.
Coz it’s not going to be warm!

Erin is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Erin loves art, drawing, designing, reading.



Photograph Pixabay.com

POEM ON ROAD SAFETY

If you ride a bike,
You need to know how to ride safely.
This is how you go,
Use hand signals, left to right,
It is better than having fight.
Emergency stop,
You may flop.
Stay in your lane,
It is better than a crashing plane.

Ethan O C. is a 5th class student in Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona, Oughterard, Co Galway, Ireland. Ethan loves computers, science, problem solving, football.



Photograph Pixabay.com

CYCLE WITH CARE

Get on your bike and cycle with care.
Be alert and always be aware.
Put on your helmet to protect your head
OR ...you might end up in a hospital bed.
Watch out for cars because they go fast.
Keep close to the edge as they go past.
Use hand signals as you go on your way.
Light up your bike,
Even during the day.

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