

My City Once Wept

My city once wept
Tear drops danced on mirrors
Paving Deminease Avenue with cracked glass.

My city once breathed
Gales wandered aimlessly through sky scrapers
As draughts of people gushed in
And out
Of openings in time.

My city once laughed
Pubs helplessly cried in hysterics
Schools belted out guffaws into empty spaces
And swimming pools made waves in lonely leisure centres.

My city once starved
Houses cowered away from fat business buildings
That were stuffing themselves with money
And John Lane got thinner at the belly.

But now my city dances
Its footsteps crushing empty buildings
And the winds carrying songs of its praise.

Orla Chapman (10)

Renaissance Rondeau

A choir sings Monteverdi,
The sound echoes back as T30*.
With a flat roof, the voices ring clear,
A dome makes them bounce by the chandelier
In a church or monastery.

Best proportions express harmony:
Echo notes both piano and forte.
Ratios pleasing to see and hear,
When a choir sings.

World and water become spheres readily,
Saw Renaissance architect Alberti.
Perfect shapes delight eye and ears
Like Greek theatres where sound was sharp as spears,
From ancient times to seventeen-thirty
Maths sails in the air, where a choir sings.

* T30 is the standard reverberation time in a church.

Herbie Wares (10)

Made in London

We were all innocent once

He freckled in the summer sun
Curly locks combed scruffily
Reddish cheeks 'cause he wasn't outrun
Over grassy fields with a smile so bubbly

But summer soon was over

Tuesday morning on a council estate
Dewy astroturf as he wakes
Dusty bricks and slanted slate
Air is mist with each breath he takes

He hears them shouting through
Sheets thin and torn with time
Still, he's got to make do
With a bed frame covered in grime

Their family clashes become clearer
'Till his sister starts to weep
A fist to mum's face looms nearer
No hope of getting back to sleep

Stale cornflakes grasped in his hand
Rushing through murder mile
Sister's school is a distant land
Stop and search takes an awful while

Half an hour staring at a cast-iron gate
Another humiliation
Nightshift job leaves him barely awake
In a school so poor it's a lost education

Hours in detention makes him late
Because there was homework he never could begin
He loses his job and secures his fate
As income goes out, the bills come in

Lesson three as boys surround him
Teachers just gawk and stare
They tear his faults limb from limb
His every mistake, they are there

One calls him fat
He hasn't had the chance to eat
Another says he's a brat
Surviving just off the street

They chant that he's too slow
So he looks into the cracked glass

Tears just start to flow
Cuts and scratches, the pain lasts

Not sure who he's fighting for
He found a place where he could see
Many fighting the same war
But must pay this indebted fee

So there he is at noon
Dealing coke and ecstasy
Trying to resist their temptation
Barely keeping his family above poverty

Moonlit streets, tearing through alleyways
He hears a strangled yelp
Sees a man dart from the shadows; nowadays
There's no time to ask for help

His sister lies all alone
clutching her knees in shame
Rallies his "brothers", for him this is honour
For them, revenge is a game

Coming home for two
His mum is bruised and dad disappeared
Sister's still bleeding; neither knows
Whose blood is it that's smeared

Head in hands comes a knock on the door
Front page of the *Express*
East end scum commits one more
From his cell, his life a mess

But what the police didn't see
Was his city without harmony

Juggling jobs
Violent home
Late-night mobs
Left all alone
Bullies gone too far
On the poverty line
Depression's deepest scar
To pretend everything's fine

How do we tell his sister
Once more isolated
Pregnant and raped with a killer mister
In the war we created
What do we leave his family
Drunk on grief, caught in between
Cold stares with no humility

Or memories never seen

Because he joined a gang
Because in this place
A knife in hand and only then
he felt safe

Josephine Ellis (13)

Late on Time

Everyone is late.
Where are they?
I found a present,
Lying on the rock,
In a thunderstorm.
Come quick!

Chloe Lightbody (10)

The Willow Tree

She died underneath a willow tree
Of a heart attack they say.
And I sat by that willow tree
Every passing day.

They said that I was mourning,
For the girl I couldn't save.
Yet I would not bring flowers
To lay upon her grave.

She never said goodbye to me.
I never had the chance.
When I heard her favourite music,
I almost saw her dance.

She lived in my neighbourhood,
In the house across the street.
I watched her from my windowsill,
Dancing with bare feet.

We used to go to school together,
She sat in front of me.
I loved her so much
Yet she never seemed to see.

And that old, wooden swing,
Made by rope and love,
Took me to her
Upon the wings of a dove.

Within the branches, I saw her face.
She smiled down at me,
I was sitting in her place,
Beneath the willow tree.

Sophie White (11)

My Place

To wake up to
Hear the
Everlasting beep of the horns

Constantly smelling the sweaty workers
And every now and then the
Pong of the street men
In the door of the shops
The smell of my gran baking
A freshly caught tray of fish
Longing for dinner and sleep

Offensive language
Flying from the streets

Removing the skin of
Oranges and getting
My fingers dirty
Another
Night
I dream
Another day I scream

Vlad Mototolea (12)

Pen y Fan

A fog-frothed day, pulsed with the tramp of boots.
The path is fringed with slush-filled ditches.
Serpentine ferns defer to the wind.
The fog comes, damply padding.
It does not purr - instead muffling moistly the distant, melancholy sheep song and motorbike cough.
We do not mind our fog; it slicks our hair and softens the crags.
Held in wary tendrils, we abandon the path.
Veering upwards, into the defiant crunch of frost.
A sudden startled sheep silently slips away.
The wet whisper of the mountain melds into the wind,
The steely air stretches.
We reach an uncertain summit; above the fog, now nacreous and ethereal,
A tremulous expanse wavers.
Uncertainly, we turn to the world, surveying the gently seething mist.
All colour and contour are dispensed, subdued, silenced, extinguished.
Landmarks have melted: the houses lie dormant, the forest drunk to but a murmur.
In the smudges, we appraise a tassel-like leaf, a single blade of grass arched by five unfaceted jewels
hanging plumply, pendulously.
We hear the filigree of a bird lamenting, its aria reminiscent of a golden thread.
Our noses are pinked and pinched, as are my feet in their cold-shrunk cases.
We linger, each balanced and wondrous.
As the silence cracks we turn to leave, and all is forgotten as we skid chattering in the now rosy glow of
the sun's cloud-shielded egress.

Iris Ferrar (13)

The Battle of World War Two

You can hear the screams of shell-shocked men crying over the bombs of the enemies from the opposing team like a basket ball game, and every time the ball bounces another gun fires, shoots, and another man is defeated.

As you look at the trenches you can see the lost boots of your dead friends lying on the ground.

As you lie in bed trying to sleep you think about your loved ones' souls emanating through the air while you hear the silent crying from the heartbroken men.

Hannah Pogson (11)

Evensong

The path runs with a river
of cow parsley and campion.
White and pink.
Air heavy, honeysuckle sweet
draped over hogweed heads which push up
and up in fat green knuckles
to grasp at hawthorn
her clustered blossoms like
fragile snowflakes, slowly melting.
Blackbird sits amongst the buds.
Black against white.
Dappling the path
with his evensong
which unfurls in spirals and swirls
like the tendrils of vetch,
moving to the pulse of insect hearts
softened by dusty moth wings.
He sings for me and I listen
until the trees disappear into dusk.
Grey upon grey.
Until his song slips into silence
and we flow
safe in our secret
towards a new day.

Emily Hunt (12)

If Buildings Had Feelings

If buildings had feelings
The Leaning Tower of Pisa would have a lot to say:

“Why, why, Italy! You beseech my looks, my style, my culture.”

“You?! Silence!”

“Italy, my love! Fix me, set me right.”

“My foolish young ‘un! Why would you, of all landmarks, complain?”

“My darling, you do not see my view!”

“I, of all countries, do deserve you. A historical artifice, culture no other place has!”

“Why should other countries complain?”

“London, Big Ben! Under construction. Mexico, that Aztec wreck! Ruins! Chesterfield –”

“Chesterfield?!”

“The leaning spire! Dire need of repair. You! Complain! Mexican ruins are in devastation.

You complain? They smart under your beauty! We have you!”

“I am a horrific wreck!”

“Hush!”

“I am a waste of space!”

“Hush!”

“Ugly!”

“Then howl to the moon, cry to the stars, weep for a comfort! None shall come!”

Ava Challis (10)

The Corridor

The door slides shut and I gaze, eyes wide,
At the wire-crossed window, far too high.
Stay there, said Granny, this will all be over soon.
Hold onto Teddy, you won't feel alone.
So I stand on tip-toes, brave boy, chin up
Pulling on Teddy's ear for luck
If I learn my times table, Teddy I say
My mummy will come home today

One times one is one.
I remember the last time Mum
Was home, smelling of lip gloss and cookie dough.
Watch the oven, she said. Don't lick the bowl.
But I wore her out, and she lay.
While the shadows slid back into day,
On the sofa still, white face, grey hair.
Just too tired for the stairs.

Two times one used to be two.
Fingers on the ledge, peeking through.
Grown-ups huddled together, pulling out tubes.
Seagull squawking of seaside shoes
Are they getting her ready? Packing her case?
I hope she remembers the card I made.
'Get Well Soon' in red felt-tip
Heart made of glitter, I love you. Kiss, kiss.

Footsteps, running now. Gowns like wings.
Crowding the passage, door closing again.
Granny crying. 'Please God, do something'.
Does she mean me? Did I look too soon?
Is it because I licked the spoon?
Will Granny be mad? My tummy in knots
Oh no! Teddy's ear is coming off.

Two times two. Is it six or four?
I stand, my face pressed to the door.
Then out they file, I'm pushed aside.
The door left open, far too wide.
Too bright, too silent. And I can see her there
Lying still, white face, white hair.
And next to the bed, forgotten on the ground
My Get Well card,
Glitter face down.

Fin Perry (13)

One Hundred Shades of Home

I come from Devon and Cornwall
Where fields are leaves on an acorn tree,
Colours,
Where hundreds of colours are whispered on winds,
Where colours are as plentiful as birds in the air,
Or stars in the night sky.

I come from the land of Devon,
Where there are one hundred shades of green,
Verdant,
Emerald and verdant are the trees and the hills,
Where hills are rolling into valleys where forests lie,
The trees show me my path.

I come from the land of Cornwall,
Where there are one hundred shades of blue,
The sea,
The sky and the sea are home to horizons,
Where blue meets blue and thoughts drift like clouds,
Aimlessly,
Waves rush rasping on pebbled beach.

Coastal sails through the harbour,
With ships so sleek and sails like sea gulls' wings,
And through the walls I gently float,
The splash of a line as it sinks in deep.

I come from Devon and Cornwall,
Where I have one hundred shades of home,
It is a choice I don't have to choose,
Jam or cream first on my scones,
For I am Cornish and Devonian.

Isaac Olsson (12)

Aroma Medley

my name is Aroma Medley
and I've lived here for so long
I walk the streets of London
and I hum a tuneless song
my skin is hardened melon
my teeth are sucked-clean bone
my eyebrows reek of pollen
and my lips of ice cream cone
my cheeks, they blush with coffee
the Thames drowns them in flu
my eyes are furtive dampness
but sweet as lovers' dew
I smile like rainy weekends
I breathe out twilight vapour
my lungs do heave with soiling fumes
my hips with car-ride caper
my hands! they stink as if unwashed
my feet! as if swaddled in frills
my legs whiff of runs down the oldest grand piano
and my arms of unspent bills.

Ani Poghosyan (13)

Asphodel

Her eyes gleamed in the shadows
In the garden by the gate -
The false and listless sun stared down
At the barren land with hate.

The fruit that she held in her hands
Was ruby-red, jewel-bright,
Bright as the girl's sad sky-blue eyes
Lost in the rocky night.

She stood, her footsteps crunching
On the long-dead, bone-dry grass,
And dropped the seeds of the fatal fruit
Like beads of coloured glass,

And left the stony garden
For the barren, ashy plain,
And its inhabitants watched the stranger
Walk through their domain.

The shadows watched her,
Their eyes cold and dark as stone,
And left her to find her way
Out of that place alone.

Brightly lit Elysium
Rose high up to her right,
A vast but lonely beacon
In the subterranean night.

The gaping mouth of Tartarus
Sank steeply to her left,
And the dead were all around her
Faces empty and bereft.

She wandered by the bleak, black bank
Of the river that drew the line
Between the world beneath the world
And the land of sea and sky.

And she stroked the sharp-toothed guardian hound
And the ferryman let her cross,
And a shadow stood on the deathly shore
And lamented her loss.

She stepped into a greener world
Flowers blooming in sweet air
She wandered through the peaceful wood
And met her mother there.

Phoebe Palmer (12)

Blank Paper

I have never seen the Arctic.
Its dream-pale coast is populated with
No memories.

I know it only through flat maps and brittle names.
I trace the frayed coast of Greenland
Laminated map smooth under feeling fingers.
The Svalbard islands; frosted fragments,
Sharp shattered shards.
'Spitsbergen' and the icebergs
with sapphire shadows.
'Baffin Bay' and the dark fins cutting the glossed water –
'Cape Farewell', and a girl straining her eyes
To watch the distant white sails dip – and a man
Who will never come back, listening to the crack
Of encroaching ice.

The Vikings knew the power of a name.
They called their new land 'Greenland'
Tempting settlers with a fragile image
Of rolling hills and woody hollows.
And settlers came – with tense shadowed fear
As the icicles grasped the stiff bows. The hope
Of something better ahead – and at last the hot pang
As the bleak coasts spread before them.
That familiar, matchless pain
Of dreams melting to reality. Wan ice crumpling
Gulped down by a groaning sea.

I know the Arctic from dimmed illustrations
And dusty dull-covered volumes;
Quaintly technical, formal and aloof accounts
By whalemens, and the voyagers
Seeking the passage through the elusive
Shifting ice floes.

Between the stiff sentences I glimpsed bravery, recklessness and glory
Sparkle of frozen wrecks and cracking cold-winged skies
The worn white bones of a forgotten story
Torn breath, timbers splitting as the frost bit deep
Blue broken mirrors and misted melting blades.
Snow; as silent, deep and dangerous as sleep –
Northern lights hurling across spinning ice-sheets –
High-beating danger, black seas
And the red midnight sun when light and darkness meet.

Steel-edged winds; salt searing, sea swelling, mast felling
And the white wild heart of a land that is never telling.

Ide Crawford (13)

The Astrolabe's Heroics

The Astrolabe, a great tool of world-span,
Of sea, of land, of sky, helper of man:

“I am a great vast astrolabe,” it said,
“Gift fit for Queens, furnished with dragon heads.

Mapper of heavens, mark of positions,
See my kingdom of stars’ premonitions.

I have been to and discovered huge lands,
Winner of all wars, kingdoms I expand.

Look at my display of dates and sky-shapes,
See the magic of science and landscapes.

I am Time, Chaucer’s friend, I am the Stars.
I am Height, I am Earth, I display Mars.

I am the Astrolabe, never undone:
Pioneer, Mariner, Tool of the Sun.

Instrument of Science, on treasure hunts,
Always retaining careful measurements.

Of the old times, the stereographic,
Mapping the numbers, hard mathematics.

Of the x, y, z plotting, the three planes,
The preserving of angles, sky retained.

I can measure all the snow-capped mountains,
Even those peaks whose height is astounding.

Look upon my works, the great trips and finds,
Be amazed as the universe unwinds.”

Now in a museum, gathering dust,
For centuries, in constant, sunless dusk

Herbie Wares (10)

Dale

I know how the castle stares,
Tall windows shining in the sun.
I know when the daffodils bloom,
Trumpeting joyfully on the verges.
I know where the meadow browns awake -
Weaving and whirling, twirling.
I know where each wild poppy grows -
Rivers of red in the wild grass.
I know how the bees whistle
In the thistles and the brambles.
I know how the foxes waltz
Beneath the glinting moon.

I know why the jellyfish wave -
Sea-swept dancers in the shallows.
I know why the shipwrecks lurk
Deep down in the cold.
I know why the waves wash
Onto the pebble-strewn shore.
I know why the dolphins dance,
Flipping over alongside the boats.
I know why the seals sleep all day,
Why the porpoise lives in the deep blue,
Why the sea urchins spike.
Because Dale is a place that I know.

Jasmine Gainfort (11)

Where I Shine

I am the sun that shines
so bright
I grow the plants
where I shine my light

I am the moon
that shines at night
that covers wrongs
now out of sight

I am the fox
you may hear me bawl
from belly of forest
you hear my call

I am the tree
that sees it all
my leaves in autumn
wrinkled, they fall

I am the sun
that places you near,
like sky-born compass
I steer you here.

Lillia Hammond (10)

Iceland - Home of the Puffins

Up before dawn,
Airport parking,
Running with suitcases,
Feeling queasy,
Cotton wool clouds,
Frozen scenes,
Finally landing,
Minus 7 degrees Celsius,
On to a coach,
Icy roads,
Going too fast,
Hotel room like a prison cell,
Paper thin walls,
Time for a nap,
Tired from travel,
Another coach,
Travelling through night,
Middle of nowhere,
Clear skies littered with stars,
Minus 13 degrees Celsius,
Heavy boots,
Socks with tog ratings,
Hot chocolate and Northern Lights,
Waking up late,
Still dark outside,
Buffet breakfast,
11am sunrise,
On the road again,
Savage and unforgiving landscape,
Magnificent glaciers,
Rainbow skies,
Volcanic views,
Clicking camera phones,
Powdered snow,
Snow angels,
Snowball fights,
Raucous laughter,
Numb fingers,
Ponies not horses,
Impaling icicle swords,
Nutella and strawberry pizza,
Lego in the loos,
Expensive lunch,
Boiling vents in freezing snow,
Vomiting geysers,
Minus 9 degrees Celsius,
More hot chocolate,
Sunset like fire,
Souvenir puffin statue,
Plane ride home,

Plus 5 degrees Celsius,
Heatwave!

Angelina Thakrar (11)

Museum of Ideas

A bath of gold will only kill you
Does your dictionary have no definitions?
You have to look where they think you can't see
When it's raining even a blanket will do
As fast as a cheetah on a cosmic motorbike
Humid like a million stars
The clock is turning at the speed of light
When lightning strikes, changes your computer
Where there's a corpse, there's a murderer
The truth is as easy as $1+1$
If you've got wet woods, make a den
A tortoise cannot be seen through its shell
Like a lethal snake reality bites.

Alfie Richmond-Ruff (10)

The Ballroom of Mud and Weeds

The magpie flew over. She called and screamed to nothing and no-one. Nancy quietly watched her song to no-one. Nancy waited until the magpie was gone and away. She smiled to the gone magpie that sang for nothing and no-one, then stepped into the ballroom full of mud and weeds. Nancy was quiet as she danced in the ballroom of mud and weeds; the creatures were patient with her while she performed her silent dance. The ballroom of mud and weeds stretched for miles, filled with tall beams that housed creatures by the hundred and stood to reach stars, and accommodated thick carpets of moss and morning dew. The ballroom ceiling was ever changing, from burning orange to blues and deep ocean indigos. Nancy did not think fondly of the rude creatures around her, staring and gossiping - Nancy rather preferred the magpie who sang her song for no-one. Magpie kept to herself and did not bother with the rude creatures and snakes. She gazed up to the tall ceiling; a trio of crows were dancing among the tall beams that stood to reach the stars. The crows often danced in the ballroom - Nancy did not think fondly of the rude crows either. Nancy took another step and found herself fallen to the moss carpet ridden with wet mud and rude creatures. Nancy sat, most displeased, on the moss carpet and wet mud, watching the rude creatures crawl between her filthy fingers.

Ophelia Ellis (12)

Planning a holiday to the Northumbrian Coast

Banburgh, Beadnell, Belford, Budle Bay;
Promises of names, distant-sea pearly, delicious
Names that breathe and listen and speak
I know I'll see centuries at Alnwick in one flitting day.

Names sunken in time-old sea, buried in time-old land
Names of all shapes – some rounded, some crooked, some sharp
Names of all flavours – sweet, bitter, tart – waves in your mouth
Craster, Boulmer, Warkworth Castle, Ross Sands.

Sugar Sands is surely lapped with a lemonade sea
In Belford the bright but distant bells must ring
Sugar Sand and Belford, rounded and sweet
And dunes where my heart will be full and free.

For the sugar and salt of the sharp sea breeze I yearn
For the Aln, 'bright river'; Berwick, place of 'barley' sands –
Cocklawburn, sharp, clunky and suggestive
Hungry-stomached waters at Rumbling Kern.

Crab-shells, quays, thrift – all that I love most
Goswick, 'goose farm', Howick, 'hawk's farm'; Craster, 'crow's hill'
Wild, whispering winged names, flying fast and free
Longhoughton, long and trailing as the coast.

My lips ebb and flow round 'Druridge Bay'
With its twisted tide-turn curve
Wastes of miles-mirroring misted sand
Silent seas of slow, smooth, speaking grey

Spindlestone, bringing Sleeping Beauty to mind
Yet nothing on this coast ever sleeps
Though more than a hundred years may pass
Here past and present are twisted and twined.

I see the fields from an unknown height
Unrolled in their jumbled brown and green and gold
A jigsaw yet to be put together or
A patchwork quilt – Google Maps satellite

It shows me the Holy Island's devil-head shape
With the Lough for a bright black eye
Crescent-moon bays in the midnight sea
The pale-edged roll of the whole landscape

And the flowing routes of the burns at Budle Bay
Deep dank green, curling and coiling
Like locks from the head of a shellycoat
Or illuminated scrolled letters, they make their way

The name Seahouses makes me suddenly crave
A house with walls of shell and windows of wave

With coat stands of coral, with sofas of froth-foam
A white-winged-wave of a home

With a tall kelp-forest where the lawn should be
Seahouse, seahouse, house of the sea.

Salt in the sand and the sun and the wave and the wind
Sand and sun and wave and wind of the mind

Castles on land and castles in sand
Castles spanning a thousand years
Castles spanning two tide-turns
Yet all built by human hands

And an eternal castle built with thought
Built of the past and built of the future
Built with memories and built with names
Castle of wild whirling wishes wrought

Towers that reach to a tearful sky of blue dreams
Battlements built of unchecked desire
Built of the glance of excited eyes and
Burnished with their glitter and gleam

This castle guards a close but secret land
Found by following the tracks of the sea on the sand
This castle guards a close but secret place
Found by reading a name as you would a face

Here all shines with the morning wave-crest's light
As it curls and the blue and the green glows bright
Here the heart has a seabird's fearless flinging flight
Flying over the towers to the blue dreams' height.

Ide Crawford (13)

Underground

I enter the land of the Underground,
Different from most other.
Greetings from the buzzed sound
Cries from the stress and bother.

I enter the land of the Underground,
Smokers puff intruding air,
Wails from children, buggies bound.
The snide glances, a stranger's stare.

Whining whistle of the entrance,
Colossal ants barging in.
Passing faces, marks of tension,
Heaps of litter, crumbling bins.

Flock of pigeons trailing crowds,
Cowardice to the slightest sound,
Nibbling weathered plastic crust,
Human life's only trust.

I enter the land of the Underground,
Different from most other.
Greetings from the buzzed sound,
Cries from the stress and bother.

Naureen Hassan (12)

The Stonehenge Sentinels

Rocks.

Giants.

Giant rocks.

Sentinels, looking down upon the world,

lost in a state of solitude.

They have conquered all the elements this world has to offer.

Battered, sombre faces,

whose eyes feast on any visible life, after an eternity of isolation.

Sentinels, looking down upon the world.

They have led long, solemn lives.

Shrouded in mist and mystery, they stand.

Their whisper just goes around and around and around.

Their longevity is pronounced in their deformed, but wise and proud form, like elders of a tribe.

Sentinels looking down upon the world,

like sentries guarding their innermost thoughts.

There, they have stood for centuries and there, they will stand for centuries to come.

Cicely Bradley (13)

I Crashed My Bike

The bush looking at me
getting all dark green
and saying 'come here'!
Its wild leaves staring and shaking fiercely
whistling my bike over,
like it was a spell of some sort.
Suddenly I crashed dramatically
straight into that bush.
I never will forget
because whenever I take the rubbish out
I still see that same bush looking at me!

Alfie Leighton (10)

The Mind Garden

Scrabbling around in my jumbled head,
I search for some last spark of hope
That has not rejected
Me.

Sometimes, amongst the rubbish, the shouting and the chaos, I slip back to somewhere I love: my mind garden.

Where ox-eye daisies and optimistic hollyhocks sprout through cracks of paving, and roses, tulips and hibiscus bloom in perfect unity, encircled by the hum and buzz of bees.

I imagine this place, which heals my countless wounds.

I wish all the world was like this, without the pollution, violence and disagreement that cannot be undone.

One anger-stricken day, I will a fire to sweep mercilessly through my carefully tended borders, making the helpless flowers ashes.

A piece of me has crumbled, a part I can never replace.

My spark of hope is still there, but fighting the inevitable, under a mound of fears.

A miniscule dot of green pokes through the surface of white ashen dust.

I kneel down to look closer and rest my hand on it, feeling its smooth reassurance pressing against my fingers, willing it back.

Joseph Freyberg (12)

Hospital

Fifty years of sadness,
This hospital dies in blaring madness,
Closed down due to too much death,
The old man takes his final breath.
His life fades gradually away.

The souls of many lost in screams,
Rooms filled with unfulfilled dreams,
Each one covered with creeping dark,
Like a child lost; in a busy park,
Left alone on the swings to play.

Their look of fear as the machine bleeps,
A reputation of deaths so deep.
The minor life left slowly dies,
The nurse's face so filled with lies,
The darkness masked by this sunny day.

Each victim left here to suffer alone,
Their emotions shattered in an attempt to moan,
They lay there completely lost of speech,
This place, like a game, packed with cheats,
Still disguised by this white horizon.

As you claw for the life that slowly shatters away,
You realise that help is not at all near,
The nurse that visits you no longer appears.
Fifty years of lies and madness,
Fifty years of echoing sadness.

Daniel Griffin (12)

Bird's Eye View

I soar gracefully over my homeland,
a land of song and poetry,
of magnificent mountains, shimmering shores,
and patchworks of emerald green fields.

I see a land of yawning valleys,
and soft violet heathers,
of endless ink black coal mines,
and crowds of dancing daffodils.

Wales has deep grey-blue oceans
and towering, rugged cliffs.
It has bubbling rivers and crystal lakes,
covered in rainbows and cascading waterfalls.

I glide through dense cloud and mist,
that are like pearly carpets of wool.
I rise in a beautiful arc,
then plunge down like a stone.

I pass forests of deep green foliage,
and land in a lake of glass.
The fragile mirror shatters,
then rises in a gentle wave.

The sun is setting steadily,
casting its golden glow,
over the wonderful welsh landscape,
and off I fly, silently, swiftly.

I pass through the pale pinks and sharp oranges,
the yellows and the sapphire blues,
and finally, I'm a dot in crimson red,
a speck and then I'm gone.

Niamh Gardiner (11)

Howarth Personage

The Parsonage: expectation squared.
And yet –
I wonder, faced with windows all in line,
What expression did I want this house to have?
The windows were eyes to them,
And met their gaze unflinching
As the eyes of home will.
But this is not my home, and the windows
Are windows, opaque with reflections.
I try to stand
As they might have stood
To coax a glance from those dark panes,
Withdrawing
So suspiciously under their brows.
“Know me if you can! Know me if you dare!”
“I will know you. I dare know you.”
And dweller within who wrote those words
And her sisters –
I dare know them.

Inside, the rooms arranged with poignant care
Hours of painful caution trying to capture
A moment’s carelessness.
Charlotte’s writing desk over split,
The pen most carefully placed to snare a second.
On this blind table top those words were written,
And I dare to imagine the sigh of the pen
Soaring over the paper darkly
Like a lapwing crossing the moor.
I dare to imagine the words that have felt like mine
Formed in a mind that I cannot know.

Anxiously disordered
A shawl hangs over the sofa arm –
And the sign states in embarrassed font
The story of that sofa.
I dare to imagine the weighted falling silence
And the way every tick of the clock
Was a blow on the brain of the listeners
Feeling a pain that I cannot know.

Here behind glass are primroses
That shone on a sloping bank one March
And round the edge of the paper

The little marks of Charlotte's brush
As she tried to find the purest shade.
"Was she happy when she painted these?"
I cannot know. I think
There's little satisfaction in the sketch –
She held it out perhaps, and fretted
Because the glowing faces on the bank
Could not be caught
Could not be known.

Here, behind glass again
Is Emily's "Nero, body of a merlin" –
The fierce beak curved in scorn.

But all Merlin's enchantments could not catch
The fiery freedom, so she turned
To something stronger than enchantments –
Turned to words. And then she caught it:
Fire and freedom and the hills and the hawk
And the wind and the sun and this life
"Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending
Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars."

What was that? A flash –
The lightning that spilt the tree
At Wuthering Heights.
This cold glass shattered and a hand reaching
It is two hundred years and I don't care
I chafe the ice-cold fingers in my own.

I cannot know them. But I know this:
They tried, like me, to capture and to know
Some part of this free life that I can't hold
To know, without shooting the bonnie bird
Clipping the wings of the proud hawk
Or tearing up bright flowers by the roots.

Ide Crawford (13)

Where Was the Start of Time?

There's a time and place
For everything that happens
All events follow this rule.
But there is one thing
That doesn't fit in
With the natural way of it all.

Where did we start all of the time?
How long was it ago?
Was it silent?
Did it roar?
Was it only Chaos that saw
Where our world went?

Did life begin immediately?
Or was it barren rock?
When did water appear?
Were there ever gods?
Did they put us like peas in pods
Solely to spread turmoil here?

But the question remains
Of when the dawn came
And when the first sun rose
Over the darkness
And our new world's starkness
Every day its hallowed light showed.

We still don't know when
But more important is where
The magic of life arose
Lost in space
Where was the place
Souls made the mystery they pose?

Rosa Lynas (12)

I am the First to Everest

We fought the mountain's might
With Everest's summit still in sight
We journeyed on, and on up high
With fear of failure, but I
Found greater purpose in this climb
I'll be a legend, for all time.

We started at the mountain's base
And journeyed up its rugged face
Those heartless crevasses that walked
And constantly beneath our feet they talked
The depths below began to roar
Into unknown underworlds, a door.

Wreathed in snow the peaks ahead
A single track through ice we tread
Hostile landscapes, savage grounds
Biting winds and thund'ring sounds
Cloaked in white, slashed and pained
To our enemy we were chained.

Darkness appears, sun laid to rest
Along the horizon, heading west
Weary souled and aching feet
Mind and body admits defeat
Not forever; just this night
We set up camp until first light.

Veiled in deafening silence we woke
Greeted by an icy cloak
Shielded by the freezing haze
Behind which lurked the mountain's maze
Toothed peaks soared up higher
Still and calm the mountain's choir.

Unstable ridges, narrow ledges
Deadly drops, invisible edges
Howling sounds of animal cries
Echo upon echo beneath the skies
The weight of the heavens upon shoulders fall
Before us looms the perilous wall.

The last obstacle, the final ascent
A whole new world, a new advent

Day upon day we had acquired
What for long we had desired
I believe we have been truly blessed
To be the first to Everest.

Marat Bilalov (11)

My House

Stood outside,
On a drive of stones.
The dusty car lays dejectedly,
infested with cats
And crawling with spiders,
With second-hand glass
And an ant network
Under the frame.
Meanwhile, the door sits
On the front of the house
With a somewhat uncomfortable look.

Sasha Hyland (12)

The Three Planets

Mercury: a grey football in space.

Mercury: a miniscule place.

Mercury: cute, but deadly.

Mars: a ball of crimson.

Mars: a burning planet of flames.

Mars: a living nightmare.

Neptune: a planet of dreams.

Neptune: deep in silky blue.

Neptune: drowns you in your sleep.

Harfateh-Vir Singh Virdee (12)

My Garden!

I once had a pet bee,
I named him Lee.
He was a helpful creature,
Black and yellow stripes,
What a lovely feature!

When I went in my garden,
He buzzed up to his hive.
He was making runny honey,
Just for me.

The very next day,
He flew away.
When he came back,
He had a swarm on his tail!

Lee oh Lee!
I do love you.
But I don't know how you found
All those bees.

I once had a pet bee,
I named him Lee.
Now he's joined by all
His friends pollinating
Flowers in my garden, happily!

Toby Smith (10)

The Blind Sea's Blunder

Towering and bold, torrents crashing down on the gusts of the sea,
Sending the sea into a whirling vortex.
Putting souls into an eternal slumber,
Condemning them to the jaws of Satan.
Jagged lightening smashed the hull,
Causing debris to fall astray.
For nothing can survive the blind sea's blunder.

Crashing and bashing,
The livid storm, churns up the ship into a terrible bliss;
Causing the work of a hundred souls to fall into an abyss.
Swirling waves, tore holes in the beaten-up ship.
Water steadily rose up,
Sending furniture down the groaning stairs.
Barrels of beer; crates of food withdrew.
For nothing can survive the blind sea's blunder.

Streamline and strong,
Gallons of water crashed into the once powerful men.
Shivering sailors grasped for a hold on the flooded deck.
The scrawny boatswain got swept away a'loft a wave,
Once merry men preyed to see loved ones once again,
Before mighty jaws swallowed up the ship.
For nothing can survive the blind sea's blunder.

Donte Ijebor (11)

My Heart

The room in my heart is a golden place
with different paths for me to take.
Sometimes it's a towering castle
in the classic fairy tales.
Other times it's a thunderous storm
torrenting over the single light of a candle.
When this tempest is raging on,
I feel my hurt and salty sadness escaping,
falling down my cheeks.

Sometimes a minotaur has been let loose in my room,
and it clumps about and scratches bleeding holes
in my red home.
Its scarlet face and hairy body angers me,
and drives me to the extinction of happiness.

This creature gets scared,
and becomes a tiny fur ball huddled in a corner.
It stitches my heart up and restores me to happiness.
But regret takes charge over me and pulls the stitches apart.
Guilt.
Sorries are the only needles that stitch them back.

Clementine Ardagh (10)

The Ancient Woodland

I went into the woods today, in the morning light,
Because the fringe of the wood beckoned me,
The clearing full of rays of sunlight called me,
The trees of ancient age spoke to me,
And the leaves of a dense canopy whistled to me.

But when I enter in the night all I see is
Roots like bulging veins,
Trunks like marching soldiers,
Twigs like creeping fingers,
Boughs like arms of the dead,
And sap dripping like blood.

Hannah Kingdom (12)

Devon Heaven

Stories will never end,
Fields keep going,
Sheep just waking up,
Smells that travel miles,
Country roads disappear,
Bony trees wave hello in the woods,
Country songs keep playing,
Cottages screech like babies screaming,
Tractors rumble like thunder,
Farmers stay up all night.

Leo Taragon and Joe Gilbert (12)

Night Dreams

I close my eyes in one world
And open them in another.

I am the creek that runs through the woodland
The oaks that spread out their roots.
The wind that weaves in and out of their branches
The birds fresh chattering in Spring.
The song sung from a minstrel's lips
The notes born on their scripts.

I am the penny of light in the sky -
A commander of a stolen fleet looks to it
A robber sees it as his guide
This cloud breaker. this lunar flare.

I am the street spirit, free running
With the foxes and the badger
Past the houses where children sleep
And the cities with their noise pumping.

I close my eyes in one world
And open them in another.

Orla Chapman (10)

A Poet's World

Bare black portal to my own world,
Hop scotched stones dotted the water,
This is the land of a poet,
One step, two step, three step,
Little ripples spread the surface,
Silhouettes of shoals, darting by,
Minute florets lined the water's edge,
This is my world,
Watch the water,
Small vortex back to reality,
I am the ruler of this world,
A majestic curtain of water watches over me,
Look into the future,
Contemplate your soul,
Over time ivy winds,
Over the ancient stone,
Icicles tower into the lagoon,
Words form in front of my eyes,
This is the land of a poet.

Zoe Payne (11)

The Sea

Above the teal surf,
A little jolly bird flies,
Freedom on her wings.

Charlotte Walker (12)

Adieu

This totalitarian society just turns a blind ear:
Utter seclusion, no one to hear.
Our battles we face, we must face alone
Ever since we decided to abandon our home.
Once divided by sea, now divided by spite,
It is almost as if we've turned out the light
So now we're in darkness which seems without end
Nursing these wounds that we can't seem to mend.
The storm around us we can't escape -
We're trapped inside this unending mistake.
There's howls and there's whistles, that ring in our ears
Bringing back memories of terrible years.
I am an island, alone and afraid.
They say we'll be fine, but I wish we had stayed.

Hannah Craig-Sharpes (12)

Sun

Across the open space
Lies a silent sun,
Orange, open, alone.
Stars dance and stamp,
While the whispering sun
Lies low, across the open.
Planets spin and sing,
Planets sleep with dream-sheep,
While the sun sighs.
Across the open space
Lies a crying sun,
Orange, open, alone.

Tomas Fernandez Bruna (11)

If My Mother Were a Place

If my mother were a place she would be made of salty water.

“Nonsense,” she says, her eyes glittering like silver-blue whirlpools.

“You can scarcely swim.”

Yes. I know. And yet...whenever I curl myself up as small as I can in her arms I think I can hear the sea breathing in and out upon the sand

And sorrow slips away

Silently, like a fish in the water gleam

And her whisper a soft and tickly wave

As it gently returns me to the shore.

Anaïs Dietz Lipscomb Dos Santos (10)

Your Place

You're standing behind the curtain and your heart beats real fast and you stare up at the ceiling and wonder how much time has passed.

The misty silence as everyone awaits for backstage crew to drop the weights,

And send the red curtain flying apart and you're worried you're not ready to play your big part,

You know there's an audience waiting with eager grins spread across their faces and all the cast are waiting in their places,

Your best friend then runs up to you and whispers in your ear, "For goodness sake, you've done this every other year!"

Something deep down is telling you that she's right but you could stand behind that curtain until day turns into night,

And then the clapping starts the hearty round of applause and know your time is coming, no more slamming doors,

As the light turns into darkness you give one final shudder and through a crack in the red velvet curtain you can see your mother,

Her eager eyes are flicking back and forth trying to spot you dress as a dwarf,

With your too-big brown shoes and the wig that somehow smells of booze,

And your hairy red shirt and your checked brown skirt,

But now it's time to step on the boards and show off to everyone that you are the dwarf lord,

With your shiny gold crown and it seems so strange to see every dwarf bow down,

As you enter the stage with a grin on your face, and you know you have found your place.

Beth Coppin (12)

The Land of Sorrow

In Flanders field the poppies grow,
Taking away the gloom,
The ground upturned and thrown about,
Making an earthy tomb.

In Flanders field the grass won't grow,
The shoots dying too soon,
But the poppies grow strong and tall,
Reaching towards the moon.

In Flanders field the trees can't grow,
The earth pushing them down,
But the poppies thrive in this lonely place,
Not letting fear make them drown.

Nicholas Rodrigues (10)

Doodling

Ink, spilling its creativity.

Pen moving gracefully, kissing its true love.

Decorating the paper, like it's your mind.

Stepping across the page, like a ballet dancer.

Shapes start to slowly form

Patterns of thoughts live.

Across lazy whiteness that wait for them.

A drawing of random thoughts.

Art in a mini gallery.

Mia Hawkins (11)

My Dark

At day, the land gleams with lonely shine,
The waves crash against the walkways
And light flecks the water crests as they align
With the dazzle of the white sun's rays

But as the sky's blue paint comes chipped
And stretches, long, a shadow's silhouette
The sunny, attractive façade is stripped,
While the sun begins its steady descent

At last, when darkness leaves light undone
And the nightly stars begin to cluster,
Is when buildings turn to gutted skeletons
And a mere bridge to a crouching monster
Palm trees stretch down sharp claws instead of leaves
Reaching for prey beneath nights' eerie cloak
Whilst in dark, murky water, interweave
Gliding, shadowed creatures of blurred smoke

After the moon has had its fun,
My nightly sightings have left their mark
And if imagination answers to none,
No one knows what's in my dark.

Olivia Bailey (13)

Alive

Blinding sun, lapping waves, cooling breeze.
Dancing palm trees, singing birds, relaxing ambience.
Tantalising food, mouth-watering drinks, captivating sunset.

This is how most people describe their favourite place, don't you agree?
Let me tell you something... not me!

Howling wind, sickening silence, desolating loneliness.
Crunching sound of steps on dried leaves, snapping twigs, disappearing rays of sunshine.
Soul-wrenching grief, tear-brimming eyes, heart-breaking loss.
Caving-in graves, crumbling tombstones, waning epitaphs.

This is the favourite place for me.
As it helps dampen my misery.
Makes me feel alive.
Surrounded by my beloveds who had thrived when alive.

Every breath that soars through me,
And the blood that flows in me,
Helps me to fight the demons within me.

When I am in my favourite place
I feel alive.... for now.

Komal Khan (13)