

The Lauren Child

Poetry Illustration Prize

2018

## The Poems

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### 1. Oh! And What Inspired You to Write It?

Opefoluwa Sarah Adegbite (13)

#### Oh! And What Inspired You to Write It?

This poem was written  
with the breath of an African  
jungle's lungs. Where the circle of life  
is sometimes a squashed oval,  
but slowly shifting itself out to rights.  
A place where  
slow words whisper  
life into the strife of God's  
creatures.  
As they lie,  
unaware of  
the small girl, hidden in the recesses  
of drip tips and lianas,  
capturing their pain with  
a cheap notebook and pen,  
scribbling letters onto a  
piece  
of the tree they used to live in.

This poem was written  
in the hidden alleys  
of a cramped neighbourhood  
in South London. The crust of  
the UK bread, that  
you  
pull apart and toss aside –  
you feed this borough to the pigeons,  
let them feast on its piles of flats  
and chipped street signs.  
Written for the boy in the  
grey hoodie; the words 'drop-out'  
scribbled in blue Sharpie across his forehead.  
Unaware

as the small girl with the  
dashiki records his  
hurt and lets God blot it all out.

Ink doesn't last forever, you know.

This poem was written  
on the back of a  
napkin, in a diner as greasy  
as the stringy strands on the waitress's  
head. As the  
wrinkled stools yawn their  
silvery mouths and the  
aching lights shut  
their eyes,  
she  
crinkles out, a back so weary  
from holding debt,  
the small girl can't  
help but exclaim, "It'll be okay."

Into the crippled ears of an off-white page.

This poem was written  
in the white walled room  
of a somewhat quiet teenager.  
No school friends up here  
for fear they'd laugh at pink cupboards and  
stick-on flowers.  
no school friends up here for fear  
of them glancing over a mosquito-bitten  
shoulder, seeing the poem  
being written  
At 2 and a half am, where the  
silence is so thick and  
raw, she almost reached out to stuff it in her  
pocket, to chew on later.  
Where handwriting doesn't matter and indents file  
their way in like soldiers of an army – and where the  
only company is a fragment  
of Heaven, written on the palms of my hands.

This poem was written  
with the ink of the blood  
given to me by God,  
on the spare piece of paper  
we all have, folded,  
inside a zealous heart.

For isn't that the place where all words start?

## 2. His Place

Indra Carigiet (11)

### His Place

In a raggedy corner of the patchwork room,  
In front of the chocolate box cabinet.  
His place.  
More special than the sun to the sky,  
Than the moon to the night.  
The top, covered with careful scratches from a thousand  
lifetimes,  
And bottles of liquor innocent hands would never dare to  
touch.  
And photographs,  
Capturing the loudest moments and making them quiet.

As he hid behind the custard bowl sofa,  
Next to the finger painted piano,  
He gently pushed the key,  
Into the enameled lock,  
Re-entering ended lives.

Silver keys in silent drawers,  
Unlocking doorways to hidden pasts,  
And unyielding cameras,  
With ignorant film,  
Denying to ever be found out.

The smell,  
Pure beauty,  
Not caring about the laws of nature,  
Taking him to a place,  
Not of gold and diamonds,  
Nor endless richness,  
But of love.  
For the beauty of love,  
Was never ending,  
Just like his love,  
For the smell,  
For the feeling,  
For,  
His place.



### 3. Norfolk

Bryony Strickland (12)

#### Norfolk

Holkham Bay is a soaring gull  
With wingspan of miles  
Millions of tiny yellow feet  
Decorated with Nature's jewels  
Sharp and beautiful

The sea is a giant squid  
Spurting dark ink onto  
The greying sky  
With huge hydraulic arms  
And lethal embrace

Old Hunstanton is a pale oyster shell  
Grooved by perfect winds  
Who then sigh with satisfaction  
At what they have created  
Irregular geometry

The waves are a fighting crab  
Whose shiny back swells with the tide  
Until he is a warrior  
Who plays by no rules  
The champion of time

Norfolk Coast is an old seal  
Whose age is shown by beauty  
That passes through generations  
With the touch of a grey whisker  
That will never die.



### 4. Feathers in the Snow

Dylan McClung (11)

#### Feathers in the Snow

Little wee bird  
Flying all over the world  
Looking for his family  
Missing them the most  
He found empty nests

Feathers in the snow  
The little wee bird  
Was a little wee ghost

He searched in gardens  
And little cat homes  
he found his missing family  
Buried by the coast

Birds fly away  
With each other's souls  
And people's hearts  
To the final outpost



## 5. My House

Tahsin Rahman (12)

### My House

School kids with a box of KFC in hand  
The aroma of hot wings and chips in the air  
Mixed with tobacco and alcohol  
Broken glass, shattered on the floor  
Sounds bustling out of cars  
Music up, windows down  
Blaring sirens  
People under arrest  
Everyone rushing out their houses  
Peeping out the windows  
Uploading the scene on Snapchat  
Middle of it all –  
There's my house.

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Jet black door  
A square-eyed, spoiled little brat hogging the telly  
Doing the dishes or sweeping the floors  
Screaming or shouting –  
That's my mum  
And the ghost called Samia  
Hovering from the car  
To the laptop,  
That's my sister

In the world of her phone  
But I run past the rainbow rooms  
To the pot of gold  
The arms of my hero,  
My dad.



## **6. If Only I Were the Azure Sea**

Rufaro Tom (13)

### **If Only I Were the Azure Sea**

Daddy says I will forever be a graveyard  
Where all his ambitions and dreams go to die  
Daddy says I will forever be like a prison  
Stripping him of every trace of gaiety

I remember when she still roamed the earth, her eyes would gleam  
Like a blueberry swimming in a sea of cream  
And in her voice as gentle as autumn's breeze  
She would say, sweetie, you can be whoever you please

All I want to be is the beach next to the azure sea  
Where we used to swim when we were a family  
Mummy's ashes and I would be entwined for eternity  
Daddy would finally be liberated from me

If I were a beach, the Sun would be my friend  
Sweltering heat and endless light she would send  
When the sun was ready to say goodbye,  
A fusion of warm colours would inhabit the evening sky

If I were a beach next to the azure sea  
The sand would be like a pool of dough kneaded with glee  
The waves would be like a kind hand consuming every-thing in its way  
The breeze would be like an orchestra of whistles, singing the night away

Daddy says I will forever be a graveyard  
Where all his dreams and ambitions go to die  
Daddy says I will forever be like a prison  
Stripping him of every trace of gaiety

I say Daddy will forever be my home  
Showering me with as much love as a broken man can  
Each night I cry for you mummy, why?  
Her body is gone but her soul lives on in the azure sea.

## 7. My Special Place

Abdullahi Cianni (11)

### My Special Place

Inside of me I have a place I go.  
Only there I'll see your face  
One that I'll never know.

I'll never touch your big soft hands,  
Or see you succeed in life.  
Only in my special place  
Where your memory is kept.

I never will have a normal childhood  
Or height charts to mark it.  
I never will stop falling into  
This bottomless pit.

I will always be known  
As motherless, lost, weird.  
I will always be known as the foster kid  
And always to be feared.

The memory of that day  
I found out you were here  
The pain since you were there  
Will always bring me a tear.  
I'll hold your memory with me.  
The pain somehow I must face  
In my heart and dreams  
You'll be with me in my special place.



## 8. The Dark Garden

Naomi Rich (10)

### The Dark Garden

Oak trees line the suspicious drive,  
wondering if they will survive.  
The gherkin grass as green as a crocodile.  
Looming in the ghostly shadow of the house.

The scarlet noises dance in the night.

Creepers lie around waiting for their prey.  
Plastic bags instead of blossoms,  
brown grass and wilting flowers.  
Daffodils dying by the hour.

The sweet rose blood strawberries,  
and a gardener in a long-lasting sleep,  
guarded by the silent lions.  
The ivy creeping up across the flower pots.

Roses are red and violets are blue,  
the sun is dying,  
and so are you.



## **9. Where Will My Place Be?**

India-Amethyst Thakrar (13)

### **Where Will My Place Be?**

Your weak breath rattles in your fragile chest,  
Eyes closed in a longing for sleep,  
Dark hair lies dishevelled on the pillow,  
Face damp with perspiration,  
Your trembling hand tightly clasped in my own,  
Death's impatience creases your brow,  
Every quiet gasp,  
I treasure.

The hospital ward,  
Is an alien landscape,  
Bearing no resemblance to our abandoned home,  
Save for the myriad number of,  
Pitiful "Get well soon" cards,  
Filled with forsaken hope,  
And the wilting, silver balloon,  
That hangs over-head,  
Akin to a waiting entity,  
Come to reap your soul.

Surrounded by familiar strangers,  
Shadows clad in white,  
Their voices,

Constant echoes of your swiftly degrading condition,  
Their faces,  
Masks never trespassed by emotion,  
No tears ever shed.

My place is by your side,  
But where will I belong,  
Once you're gone?



## **10. Rooftops**

Savina Sidhu (13)

### **Rooftops**

The sun will rise, and the kids will come  
the 'if I could I would feel nothing' kids  
or maybe 'I feel nothing' kids  
the too-cool kids, the cyan-eyed kids  
the bipolar, narcissistic personality disorder kids  
the no inside voice kids  
the freaks and the geeks  
and here they will sit, waiting  
until the fire sets  
and they will try again

the sun will rise, and the kids will come again  
caring about science, caring about art  
caring about others, but not themselves  
stones kicked, lighters lit  
shattering hearts, broken dreams  
bleeding eyes, bleeding eyes  
profound explanations to their aesthetic, lack of being  
empathetic  
and here they will sit, waiting  
until the fire sets and they will try again

who knows what rooftops do for them  
maybe scraps of notebooks aren't enough  
maybe the East wind doesn't blow away worries  
maybe nature and natural beauty won't do it  
and maybe peace and solitude aren't the answer.  
Who knows what rooftops do for them?

## 11. Pitinweem

Alex Maltby (13)

### Pitinweem

Here, quaint village sits  
By hustled heath and sea.  
Battered rocks had worn away.  
HERE LIE THOSE WHO CEASE TO BE.  
Broken headstone speckle  
The even sea.  
And its wild gale, retreating bawl  
Batters the temperament of Evensongs  
Along the shore.

Abled swimmers line that place  
With gulls and gills and gales.  
These subtle rock pools, dormant.  
And the silver, shimmer of a  
Sailing sea opens  
Her motherly bosom to the public.  
A crawling crab surveys them all,  
Eyeing those out of place.  
Safe within a borrowed shell from  
Where the wind doth blow  
Like a whetted knife.

Here lies a place  
Where vicars converge  
In rickety cabins over  
Rickety piers  
On rigid shores.  
And through the quick-cut silence,  
The prayer of one  
Faith-lost Father  
Is heard.

Where the land and sea  
Greet hand in hand dictates  
Our craggy cliffs.  
Its wild and burly tempest roar  
Could measure with a lion.

A child of only six to be  
Lies on the sand in ecstasy.  
He's made new friends from  
Shining shells, from hermits in the deep.

As he crawls around these rock pools  
The limpets start to peep.  
Infant hands find bygone bottles  
Where they dare not creep.  
The sun peaks down through  
Infant's thick white duvet  
And her warm glow nods him gently to sleep.



## 12. Sketch

Chenrui Zhang (12)

### Sketch

9 Conduit Street,  
Mayfair,  
London,  
England.  
Velvety seats,  
Egg-shaped toilets,  
Moustached men,  
Floral ladies.

Russian caviar,  
Quail egg,  
Caramel bites,  
Finger sandwiches.

Pommery Apanage,  
Dubbonet and gin,  
Frappuccino,  
Tea.

Gold canvas,  
Peculiar art,  
Shiny doors,  
Pink napkins.

9 Conduit Street,  
Mayfair,  
London,  
England.