

# Spark

## Young Writers



WRITING  
WEST  
MIDLANDS

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# Spark Young Writers Magazine

Sometimes if I'm in a school or running a writing session and the young writers look like I've set them something impossible, I will say: "Would I ask you to do something I couldn't do myself?"

The smart ones always say yes -- and of course they're right, of course I would. There's no point having a group of writers if you can't get them to write more or better than you.

But for this issue of Spark Young Writers Magazine, there is one piece I truly do not comprehend how it could be done. Take a look at "Winter Renga" on page 5: it's the magazine's first-ever group-written piece and it's tremendous.

I'd say that so many of this issue's pieces are tremendous, but then that's the point: they have to be or they don't get in.

Yet of them all, it was still easy to pick "Delphi" by Sabine O'Mahoney as the Editor's Choice. It's intentionally simple and stark, but O'Mahoney clearly knows that writing is both about the words you use and the words you don't, because it's the unspoken sense of loss that will stay with you.

William Gallagher

Editor

Spark Young Writers Magazine is a publication of Writing West Midlands. We support creative writers and creative writing across the region. More information about us can be found on our website: [www.writingwestmidlands.org](http://www.writingwestmidlands.org).

This magazine features writing from children and young people aged 8 - 20 who live in the West Midlands of the UK. It is also available to read online at [www.sparkwriters.org](http://www.sparkwriters.org).

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# Delphi

## Sabine O'Mahoney

I know a person called Delphi, and I think she's a pretty girl.  
She has sandy locks along with a pair of striking hazel eyes.  
She skips a step in her ambling and always does a twirl.

I have a friend called Delphi, and I think she has a pretty name.  
She was named after Delphiniums – elegant flowers with hues of indigo or azure that  
matched the colours on her long, flowing dress.  
I watch as she skips a step in her ambling and twirls, her skirt dancing around her, and now  
my clothes look lame.

I have a best friend called Delphi, and I know she's a pretty girl.  
The amber glow of the sunset reflects in her eyes and dapples onto her sandy locks when we  
walk along the seaside shore.  
I step into the imprints left behind on the sand from her feet before they wash away, laughing  
as she skips a step in her ambling and does a twirl.

I have a classmate called Delphi, and the boys at my school call her a pretty girl.  
She stopped wearing her long, flowing dress and opted to wear short skirts.  
I watch as she walks with a boy, but she didn't skip her step in her ambling and do a twirl.

I thought I had a friend called Delphi, and now everyone thinks she's a pretty girl.  
The burning glare from the blinding sun pierces into her heartless eyes and incinerates her  
dirty blonde hair when she strides with the other pretty girls along the seaside shore.  
Her friends let the imprints left behind on the sand from her feet be engulfed by the sickly  
sea, sniggering with her, and she didn't skip her step in her ambling and do a twirl.

I knew a person called Delphi, and I thought she was a pretty girl.  
But looks can be deceiving, and her porcelain face easily shadowed her stone heart.  
She stopped skipping her step in her ambling and doing a twirl,  
I wish she kept skipping her step in her ambling and doing a twirl,  
I miss when she skipped her step in her ambling and did a twirl.

# Winter Renga

## by the Birmingham Exchange Teen Spark Young Writers Group

*Contributions by George, Jude, Isabel, Emma, James, Hattie, Toby, Alyanna, Radha, Emily, Emma,  
Sofiyyah and Nicholas.*

*Renga is a Japanese poem in the form of a tanka (or series of tanka), with the first three lines composed  
by one person and the second two by another.*

Pine trees green and lush  
A fire crackles, warm love  
Rosy cheeks and hugs

Yellow snow is bad  
I am just wishing for sun  
I have no heating

The wind is cold, very cold  
Frost bites the air, a fierce breeze

Clawing, bitter frost  
Biting shivers at my spine  
Cold death coming near

Trees are bare of flesh  
Stark naked but they stand proud  
Freckled in snowflakes

Harsh and heavy, take me home  
Frost bitten and flushed cheeks

Twined in blankets of  
frost, but also the arms of  
a mother so warm

Winter cuts deeply  
The hungry frost gnaws and bites  
Like a blizzard's sword

Icy air drowning you  
Winter wind clawing blindly

Boots slip on cold curb  
No soft falls in December  
Hard for the clumsy

Snow falling outside  
Cold, desolate, empty, dark  
Radiator broke

Wind hushes and laughs softly  
Biting round exposed red cheeks

Winter is the best  
I really like snowball fights  
Winter is the best

Frozen in the ice  
One final rose still in bloom  
Petals falling down

Hats fly away and hopes, too  
Winter wind a cold lesson

White and frosty air  
Feels less magical, no snow  
Is it summer yet?

Winter, what a time  
Remove snow with salt not burn  
everyone around the fire

# To the Principal's Office

Anisha Sahu

I kept my head down, scribbling away furiously at the piece of paper. What time was it? No, I had to finish my sentence before checking or I'd forget what I was writing.

Faintly, I heard the teacher's footsteps and my partner clicking her pen. That didn't matter. Nothing else mattered but my pen and the paper, my imagination running wild and free leaping out of the classroom and down the corridor, bursting through the boundaries, ducking under the tables of the headteacher's office, dodging in and out of the PE cones on the muddy field and finally hurtling over the gate into a free world. One without a soul in the world... just me and my imagination leaking into the world like my pen leaked on paper.

Maybe I could share a piece with everyone but for now it will have to be for you. That's until my characters are set free from the page, and I can share my passion with everyone. My imagination was racing so much I hadn't realised how many times my name was being called. I also hadn't realised the incomprehensible nonsense I was scrawling down in my notebook – somewhere between doodles and just pure scribbling. Anyway, that didn't matter either. I was lost in my own train of thought, and nobody could take me out of it.

When I wrote, it was like this invisible bubble formed around me, getting stronger and stronger with each word I wrote until it drowned out all my classmates and teachers' voices. The bell could ring a hundred times and it would all be a blur to me. I glanced left and right for a fleeting second. The person on my left was chatting to their friends and the one on my right was tapping my shoulder.

OH MY GOD! Feeling my face go red hot in embarrassment, I sank into my chair. Snatched from my thoughts, I blinked furiously as the teacher approached me, red with fury.

She picked up my notebook full of stories and flicked through it thoughtfully. "You don't mind sharing this with the class, do you? It's just that, you seem to feel that you can write this nonsense at any given time... you're ever so keen, aren't you?" she asked in a mock innocent tone. I fought the urge to say several rude words, but I clamped my mouth shut before I could make that mistake.

My face was ashen with shock when she flipped to the beginning and began to read in a booming voice so that it was impossible to ignore her. Thirty beady eyes bore into mine as she spoke, and an eruption of whispers broke out. Oh god... I had forgotten about all the insolent pictures and descriptions of the teacher I had wrote on the first page.

"Interesting...very detailed drawings Avery. In fact, they are SO amazing, I'd like you to show them to the headteacher. NOW."

# What are Storms?

Simran Kaur

The storm rages in the sky;  
The wind brings forth the waves  
As the greyness comes nigh  
To the paths of night it paves.

"Come stars, glitter now  
Where wonder awakes by night  
Come where the wind knows not how  
The steer the night delight!"

But the horizon line  
Comes to speak so grey;  
Etched, clear, straight, fine  
So covering the sunset today.

The clouds come yonder  
From the moors and dells  
Coming to the sky to wander  
The land o'er the sea's grey bells.

But hearken now the clouds come fast,  
The eyes of it are here anon last.  
The birds turn, the shade upon shade  
The shade the daylight ere forbade.

Hearken to the air!  
Wild, long, sharp wind not fair  
Hearken to the cry  
Of the wind in the sky.

The waves are slowly awoken  
From a long and restful sleep  
From the long hours a token  
Of the storm so deep.

The air is dull  
The clouds dilute  
Their grey within the lull  
Of wind with grey suit.

But wait the sea is lashing  
Fiery greyness, anger nigh  
The world is uplifted splashing  
Spraying to the sky.

Birds grow distant anon;  
The waves so wild upon;  
The earth shakes the sky;  
The greyness comes nigh.

The world is set in shade  
The grey the stars forbade  
The air, the wind, the sea is wild  
The sea is thus a grey beguiled.

“Freedom, do you sing?”  
The birds as spectators ring  
“Anger do you awaken?  
Or are you disturbed and shaken?”

“Is it freedom now you fly  
Hearken to the wind’s grey cry  
Is it anger for the ship  
That came to slash your heart to rip?”

Is it a battle in the clouds?  
Is it the mist of yonder way?  
Is it the battle shrouds  
Of lightning in the day?

Or are you Time?  
Are you time upon the line  
Breaking in the day  
Where wild winds do play?

By Time I mean are you the hand  
The hand to steer the world anon  
The clock of grey to come at the band  
Of the horizon timepiece upon?

Are you Time that comes to call  
Upon the earth today to fall  
The greyness you seep to play  
As greyness your anger lay?

But then is it Time that came  
Time of memories indifferent or kind  
Time from the moorland yonder not tame  
As a wild horse, rope and steel bind?

Are you wandering in pain?  
Are you here to show the Time?  
Are you here in indifferent gain?  
Or are you here to show the horizon line?

Are you here to watch the minutes by  
Are you time’s fateful hand?  
Are you freedom calling to the lady nigh  
Are you sorrowful or are you calling her hand to see?

# Loneliness

## Abigail Higgott

Loneliness is a beaten, battered teddy bear stuck in a cold, grubby charity shop, his only companion the bright silver moon blazing through the greasy, smeared window.

Loneliness is a small, whimpering panda cub in a smoky dirty landfill, which once was his home  
Loneliness is a dusty, untouched piano in the corner of a large, grand living room, his keys buckled and broken.

Loneliness is a tall, foggy hill, looming above a lively, bustling town with nothing but a dead oak tree on its surface.

Loneliness is an outdated avocado in the back of the fridge, the one thing that nobody wants.

Loneliness is like my mum, a lost, broken soul with a piece of her life missing, a priceless jewel stolen out of a museum.

# A Plea For Action

## Madeleine Sudlow

They came from war.  
We must send them back.  
They are illegal. But wait.

They have eyes, noses, ears.  
They have hair, hands, and feet.  
They have voices and souls.  
They can voice their words,  
Their souls feel pain,

They are people.  
People seeking safety  
And we have turned them away.

We have eyes, noses, ears.  
We have hair, hands, and feet.  
We have voices and souls.  
But we do not have hearts to welcome  
These people to our homes.

Where is our love?  
Where is our compassion?  
Where are our souls that can feel pain?

Are we are so hard-hearted  
We refuse a human a place of peace and plenty?  
Put yourself in their shoes.  
How would you feel if you were not welcomed,  
Sent back to the danger you had left?  
Sending people back  
will not solve the problem of migration.  
We must welcome

Wholeheartedly  
These damaged people of the world.  
There is no problem.  
The only problem here is war.  
We must help them. NOW.

# One Step, One Journey

## Bronwen Holmes

It was terrifying. It all started when we were all sat in the living room.

Me, my little brother Noah, Mummy and Daddy. I'm Bronwen, by the way. It was at that moment we heard the sound. Ear splitting sirens, booms so loud my screams could hardly be heard over them.

"It's the war!" gasped Mummy, her face pale. I had heard about the war, a big fight between countries, usually for silly reasons like land and money. It is normally in other countries a long way from here.

I never thought it would come to England.

"Get Out!" screeched Daddy "Everyone out!"

"Why?" asked Noah, a boy for questions.

"Because we will get killed, sweetie" says Mummy in her comforting voice.

I persuade her to grab Black and Brown (cats) and Ginger Snap and Mr Nibbles (guinea pigs).

I felt lost and hopeless on the long, scary journey. By car, boat, train and plane we finally found a tree big enough to shelter in.

In the night the trees tower over me like giants, and the shadows prowl about like hungry monsters.

Future

It's been five years now. I go to collect the newspaper as usual and see a headline that makes my heart turn. COVENTRY FREE! Flowers skip around me like fairies and the sun beams down like a goddess. We're going home!

# Spring

## Ruby McKie

My three layers unveiled:  
A colourful scarf  
A green wool jumper  
A faux leather coat

I can taste Spring  
In my fresh mint tea  
And the sunlight pouring through the window  
In the women walking  
With jumpers tied around their shoulders  
Like cloaks for show.

But still I sense the remains of winter  
In the huddled crowds  
And their rushed walks  
In the crimson of my chapped hands  
Cradling my tea cup

In the cyclist passing by  
Almost faceless  
Wrapped in her bundles of clothes  
Deafened by the wind  
whipping back her hair

In the not quite cloudless sky,  
The circling of restless birds,  
And the bare branches of the trees  
Their nests;  
The only decoration

A revolving green recycling van,  
Almost ploughs me down.

I walk past South park;  
Earth ripped up,  
Gravel wrapped up in tarpaulin,  
Shaped like a body bag.

Birds I've never noticed before,  
Resting at the top of tall bare trees.  
I take it in  
The lingering scent,  
Of a stranger's perfume

Overgrown roots,  
Suffocate the allotment fence.  
A clothes bin with plastic bags,  
Spilling out its mouth.  
The abandoned body of a toilet,

# Pink

## Ruby McKie

A man standing in the daffodils  
To take a photo  
They're spray painted  
Neon pink

Pink follows me;  
It colours the sparse flowers  
blooming through the bricks  
It's dyed into a lady's hair  
And the fibres of her beanie

It's on the mural covering the wall  
In the woman's curls  
Painted rosebud pink

It lingers  
In a faded coffee shop sign  
That used to be red

# Why do I like Jazz Music?

## Giuseppa

Imagine a streak of gold in a dark room; a tepid hue of yellow and maroon; a melody as sweet as a Parisian night in July.

A slow tempo that sweeps you off your high horse and places you safely on a bed of cotton encompasses you; it is a beginning and an end.

The honeyed accents of the bronze instruments sway in unison to the melody that connects them and remind you that it is not so bad.

Have you ever devoted yourself to feeling the gentle strokes of the drum and the perfectly placed piano notes?

It is a recommendation for anyone with a heart as full as mine.

I feel greatly for earth's melodies as it is a signal that through a world of disarray, we can come together to organize hearts in one singular row of relaxation.

So, if you ask me why I like Jazz, it will not be a simple answer; my heart is too complex for that.

# Why do I like writing?

## Giuseppa

Many people communicate through speech or electronically; I prefer the perception of paper on my fingertips, I like finding the right pen that will haul my thoughts across a page or finding the perfect word that summarises my haphazard sentiments.

It is a feeling of pure bliss when I can imagine the words I have crafted together and grow attached to the feeling they convey.

I am in awe of the writers that have inspired me to pick up a pen and write.

Write about things that I could never be able to express vocally.

It has been my passion, ever since I could spell my own name, to write for the souls that yearn like mine does and to inspire as I have been.



# Once upon an us

## Amelie Baker

Love approached us like the rising sun.

We were once in darkness and uncertainty, but gradually bursts of light and colour advanced.

We grew through time together, our thoughts and feelings intertwined. Our roots were stabilised by the comfort and affection we shared.

Blossoms bloomed, marking our sublime connection.

All of a sudden, gusts of tumultuous winds and floods of water destroyed us.

All that we nourished and grew, fell apart — as abruptly as love had approached.

# Just a useless coin

## Ahon Ganguly

Soumya charged into battle, leaving me lying on the dusty floor. I was trampled over by dozens of horses with soldiers on top, shouting their battlecry. How could he be so heartless, so cruel? I was his lucky charm, with him for all his battles, given by his kind and loving family. I had been there since he pledged loyalty to India, to finally defeat the British Empire after their reign of terror! But no... he just left me lying on the battlefield.

I was minted on the 12th of November 1943 in Calcutta, India. The shiny, new half-rupee coin! King George VI's emblem stood proud on the face of me. A Royal Bengal tiger snarled fiercely on my back.

I waited for days before my first owner, and she was a lovely woman! She took great care of me before giving it to a young man who always carried me around in his pocket before setting off one day to fight many battles. I was always by his side, and every now and then, he would take me out of his pocket and just look at me, remembering the woman who gave me to him. Now I realise she was probably his mother.

And then, he abandoned me. I just lay there, rusting away.

My misery ended when suddenly the light came back into the world, but my ecstasy was short-lived. A man picked me up roughly and inspected me. He then left me on the table, and I watched him pass by for weeks, but he just ignored me. Why?

I soon came to know that the year was 1984. I was officially useless. Nobody needed me for buying things, not for being a lucky charm. Britain no longer ruled India, so King George VI's emblem was not noticed anymore. Was I even worth anything? Would I ever be special again?

I longed to be in the man's wallet – I saw many modern coins there. They mocked me and talked behind my back about my old features and rusty, dirt face. Soon, darkness engulfed me once more as I was put in a shirt pocket and thrown away. I had gone from being loved to being forgotten... Would anyone want me?

For 40 years more, I lay lifeless once again, recalling my past, dreaming that I was newly minted once more, young and new. I longed to be remembered...

Light shone on me again, but what was this? All I could see was a blur and white foam on top of me. Some sort of object was rubbing firmly, side to side, perpetually. What was happening?

A few hours later, a child held me and stared at me in awe. My face shone in the vivid sunlight. I looked brand new! At that moment, I was flooded with happiness – I was remembered!

The year is 2024, and I am 81 years old. Everybody is trying to grab me now, but my new owner won't let me go.

# I Will Get Chosen

## Emmie Eden

In between the endless rows of glasses in Elton John's wardrobe there sat a particular pair bursting with excitement.

"Oooh, today's the day, the day I'm going to go on stage," the yellow-petalled diamond glasses squealed. They squished and squashed in the hustle and bustle in the few minutes as Elton John got ready for his big show later that night.

The glasses - which were called Albert - became more and more impatient. New thoughts crossed his mind like: "It's me, I'm going to be chosen," and "I'm going to be famous."

But as Elton John walked past the wardrobe and to the stage, he didn't pick Albert.

In fact, he didn't pick any glasses at all. Worrying what was happening and why he hadn't been chosen, Albert listened intently to the roar of the crowd.

Suddenly Elton John ran back with his arm outstretched and chose Albert.

"Yes!" screamed Albert as Elton John carefully placed the glasses on the rim of his nose and strolled over to the stage.

# Greed

## Isabel Garcia Arnold

My only escape is through the comfort of my dreams,  
For when I wake it engulfs me,  
Clawing fingers pulling me down,  
Leaving me gasping for air,  
A bitter, metallic taste left on my tongue.

My sacrifice pays well,  
Makes me realise I deserve more, I'm worth more,  
And what once was enough is no longer sufficient,  
Ideas are wants and wants are just needs  
in disguise, you see.

So I grab and I hoard,  
Emeralds dance on my fingers,  
Now crooked and bony,  
But the jewels hide ageing with their sparkling youth.

My eyes gleam in sheer delight  
at the sight  
of my treasures,  
The skin on my face withers and crumples like pages of a book,  
But the weight and clink of my pockets  
tells me I needn't worry.

A wide smile stretches its way across my face,  
My teeth rotting and brown,  
"Replaceable" say the jingles from my pocket,  
But they sound quieter,  
Suddenly I'm not so sure,  
Sitting here alone,  
Surrounded by riches and gold; my only friends,  
Feeling smaller and more "replaceable",  
than ever.

# The Accident

## Isla Rimmington

Four months.

That's how long it took them to wake up after the accident.

For what felt like an eternity, I sat by their bedside, watching the rising and falling of their breathing, the rhythmic beeping of the machines the only constant in the sterile room. Every day was a battle against despair, a struggle against the guilt that gnawed at my insides.

The accident replayed in my mind like a broken record, each poignant detail etched painfully into my memory. It was a rainy evening, the kind where the world seemed to blur at the edges, and visibility was reduced to a mere illusion. I was behind the wheel, navigating through the slick streets with cautious optimism. But caution wasn't enough to prevent what happened next.

A sudden flash of headlights blinded me momentarily, followed by the sickening screech of tires against wet tarmac. I swerved instinctively, but it was too late. The impact was deafening, metal twisting and glass shattering in a symphony of destruction. Time seemed to slow as the world spun out of control, and in that moment, lives changed forever.

When I regained consciousness, the weight of what had transpired settled upon me like a suffocating blanket. I stumbled out of the wreckage, my heart pounding in my chest as I surveyed the scene. Emergency responders swarmed around, their voices a distant murmur as I searched desperately for any sign of life amidst the chaos.

And there they were, trapped within the wreckage, their face a mask of pain and confusion. It was in that moment that the true gravity of my actions sunk in. I had caused this, my careless mistake leading to unspeakable suffering.

The days that followed were a blur of hospital visits, legal consultations, and sleepless nights filled with haunting visions of what could have been. I sat vigil by their bedside, praying for a miracle, willing them to wake up and absolve me of my sin. But the silence of their unconsciousness was deafening, a constant reminder of the irreversible damage I had wrought.

As the weeks turned into months, hope began to wane, replaced by a resigned acceptance of the inevitable. But then, one fateful day, as sunlight filtered through the blinds and danced upon their pallid face, they stirred. It was a subtle movement, barely perceptible, but it was enough to reignite the flicker of hope within my shattered heart.

I watched with bated breath as their eyelids fluttered open, revealing eyes clouded with confusion and pain. And in that moment, as our gazes met across the hospital room, I knew that no amount of apologies could ever undo the damage I had caused. But perhaps, just perhaps, it was the first step towards redemption.

# Island Only for Three

## Chitrani Costa Fernandes

Three of us, that was all that was left. From a group of forty-five, the three of us were the only ones to make it to the island. The tempest of storms had been ruthless, engulfing our finest vessels whole and hurling us like worn-out ragdolls in its fury. The remains of an abandoned island emerged from the tottering surroundings.

As we stumbled onto the shore, battered and bruised, the realisation of our desolation sank in. No more strong emotions, no more conversations around the crackling campfire. Just the sound of powerful waves smashing against the shore and the cries of numerous seagulls overhead. We were alone.

Just us:

Linza, the charming person out of us all. If a beam of light could weave itself into a strand, it would be Linza's hair. The girl was born with the moon for hair and glittering stars for her eyes. Not only was she good looking, but also our loyal leader. With one sentence, she could turn chaos into a tranquil atmosphere.

Aarav, the placid person who hardly shed a tear. He appeared at first as a cold-hearted and seemly approachable person, domineering to us all. It makes me livid when that eristic wins his debate with false arguments. Over these weeks, I have noticed that he tends to speak less and listen more.

Me, the intelligent and knowledgable one, capable of understanding complex ideas and concepts.

Days melted into weeks, weeks morphed into months. We forged a new life on the island, learning how to fish, to construct, to survive. We explored every inch our paradise, from the sandy beaches to the lush forests. My favourites were the rough cliffs that overlooked the mesmerising sea.

Out of all this beauty, something didn't feel right.

It felt like my heart was broken and couldn't be fixed.

Deep down, hidden inside me by my fierce emotions, I knew this was my destiny. Whether I like it or not.

I could never go back, especially with the forty-two people screaming in pain down my veins.

# Something

## Anya Alden-Howells

Something is anything.

Something is a thing that moves with the flow to move,  
A thing that can be anywhere – waiting to be unlocked and found.  
Something is a thing that controls the ways of life,  
A thing that can be in any time – waiting to be discovered and unravelled.

Something is love, love that is yet to be found, and never removed,  
A thing that can change a life forever – waiting for the right time.

Something is minds of two geniuses,  
A thing that is married to one another – waiting to unroll a ring.

Something is a snake, slithering through true minds,  
A thing that looks for hope – hope that is yet to be found.

Something is a book,  
A thing with pages of stories – a thing full of love, hope and death.

Something is you,  
A thing that may seem confused – but in the end, it's just waiting to show the wonders hidden beneath the skin.

Something is anything.

You can be anything.

# The Obsessed Artist

## Sabine O'Mahoney

The Obsessed Artist started off like any other human. They could've been me and you. They stayed out of sight, practicing their talent passionately, hidden in the dark.

Yet, when an opportunity to become known and great is revealed to them, now it is their only goal to seize it – everything else in life becomes an upmost blur. The desire to be extraordinary takes over them, drowning out any thought of being short to perfection.

And so, they train themselves to become machines. They practice, and practice, and practice until it hurts, until the first signs of overworking leave disfigurements on their skin. But who would dare to stop them now? Their fear of mediocrity is life-threatening, and their associates are now their rivals. They will force themselves to become superior, in the trepidation of replacement, which leaves them distraught. A slow, quiet descent into madness, like a predator slowly crawling up at its prey; unnoticed until the last second, and by then it is too late as it swallows the kill whole, leaving nothing behind.

And when the time came for their final performance, to testify if they were truly the greatest, there was only one question on their mind – “am I ready for this?”.

As they perform, there is a setback. It is clear that they are not performing to their fullest, as if something was resisting them from their accomplishment – their old self.

One false action caused them to tumble and crash before the eyes of thousands. An outright mortification, a humiliating moment that felt like an eternity. It felt like a constant scourging of the soul, a disease that started at the hands and feet, eventually plaguing the rest of the damaged body which ended at the tattered heart. Yet, the worst part of the ignominy was not the instant of failure, but the quiet smattering of half-hearted, pitiful applause of the dissatisfied audience staring onwards.

But the show must go on.

Tainted by their previous defeat, they finally let go of their resistance and perform like never before. Every step taken is exotic and passionate, everything pin-point precise, finally achieving full greatness as they had wished.

Like a conductor orchestrating a symphony that seems to skim the skies of the heavens, like a chess player placing their final piece on the right square which would leave their opponent on checkmate, the Obsessed Artist finally feels the upmost satisfaction.

At last, they have achieved their very best!

Perfection is granted to them on a beautifully polished gold trophy that fits flawlessly into their hands. An upmost metamorphosis!

And the audience. Oh, the audience. It was the greatest approval a human being could have achieved.

# Why do you Write?

## Simran Kaur

"Why do you write?"  
Asked a question to me anon  
And through my mind I doth take sight  
Of thoughts I think upon.

"Why do you write?"  
The question I thought upon;  
I write to not lose sight  
Of the world anon.

The flowers in the grass  
Make my heart beat merry  
The tune of the little lass  
Carry words to my thoughts like a ferry.

How wild music sounds  
As to my mind it beats  
And makes my heart a breathless fount  
In awe at its great feats.

Oh, how the mountains rise!  
How the flowers gentle lain  
Upon the grass with the breeze that flies  
Of frolicking gales that make me jocund fain.

How my heart begins to beat  
Words anon to my mind  
As the laughter and the feat  
Of wonder came so kind.

The music and the tune  
Is dancing in the air  
My heart beats when I write till noon  
About wonders distant fair.

"Why do you write?" the question asked to me;  
I write because it comes to mind  
So from beats so laughing free  
As to the words I find.

As I watch the gentle colours,  
Merging in the day,  
I find the words begin to spin flowers  
Spin wonders in my heart to play.

I feel the spinning yarn  
Come to my mind each day  
When I watch the sky, the stars of night's darn  
As the wind so wild comes to play.

A flame flickers in my heart  
A beat comes to a thousand part  
The flame flickers in ways  
Where wondering sifting flowers stays.

My heart beats a dancing beat and tune  
My eyes are glittering in the starlight of  
the moon  
Till I reach my pen to hand  
Lain upon the wooden band.

The words begins to draw  
To rush, to dance, to scribble, to scrawl  
To rush the words from mind to page  
To make a blank soul a play on stage.

I make the characters my actors anon  
Make the wind fly upon  
The sky aloft the words that sings  
Each word a music the day a-brings!

The ink soaks into fibres white  
Stains them with the words so light  
That dance from heart to endless tune  
Of starlight, flowers, moonlight moon.

The words form like a galloping stride  
Dancing on the wind so wild  
As the words ne'er so hide  
To the heart to exhilarated beguiled!

Come dance starlight ways  
Come meet my words and thus I write  
In the starlight of the days  
To the wonder and delight!

"Why do you write?" Because 'tis like a  
breath within  
'Tis like breathing, like the beating of my  
heart in;  
'Tis like wonder in the fields and day;  
'Tis my music I sing at play.

I write because my heart so says;  
I write because my mind is filled;  
I write because of happy days;  
I write because I live.

# Being

## Amelie Baker

I want to see the seasons change more than once.

Death consumes me after just one glance at the beautiful landscape. One chance to absorb it all. My ancestors whisper to me "take it all in" but I want the freedom of watching time go by forever. I don't even remember falling, but I now lay dormant - my shrivelled and brown skeleton awaiting decay.

I feel myself slip away – penetrating the soil beneath.

I attempt to grasp a pathway which will lead me back to my life. Riddled with networks of fungi, tumours of plastic and scuttling detritivores, the undergrowth does not provide a safe route. Weaving through the soil for what feels like days, I reach my destination.

The roots of the tree begin to embrace and welcome me home.

An awful pain.

I feel myself splitting and only half of me makes it back home.

The other hides in the belly of a writhing worm, and I start to drift away.

Just as a worm survives a fatal chop and lives as two, my soul's existence separates.  
Where will the rest of me end up?

Sprouting from my home branches, I am reborn into a new body, but I can only be half of what I was in my past life.

I take in my surroundings and see a familiar shape in the distance.

The tree opposite bares a branch with a piece of my soul sprung upon it.

Maybe I can witness the seasons change forever after all.

# Bobetta and Bill

## Bess Titchener

Here I am, interviewing two gnomes. Bobetta and Bill. Bobetta is a cook. She greeted me here with a fabulous crunchy nut, toffee chocolate cake, topped with sugared strawberries and chocolate grapes.

Bill is a farmer. He plants radishes, turnips, potatoes, and basketballs.

So, let's hear a bit from Bobetta!

"Hello, I'm Bobetta, nice to meet you! I am a cook and a cook is I!"

"So, Bobetta, how is it being a gnome!"

"It depends. Some humans think I'm a garden decoration! Garden gnome! Little do they know, I'm the one who fixes their cooking when they go to the bathroom!"

"Oh, that's bad, Bobetta, I'm sorry! How is it living with Bill?"

"He's OK, but every time I make a good meal, he declares it's only good because I use his plants!"

"Oh, OK."

"SO, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I MARRIED HIM!!!"

"Oh, umm, OK, Bobetta."

"I WANT TO MAKE A MEAL WITHOUT BILL'S PLANTS!"

"OK, you do that and I'll go talk to him."

As you can hear, Bobetta can grow angry with just the thought of something.

We shall now look at Bill, Bobetta's husband.

"Hello, Bill!"

Bill is in the barn surrounded by obscure planted basketballs.

"Alright, human being!"

"So, can you tell us about your basketball pitch."

"I started growing these thingies since I first married Bobetta. Ever since, every nigh' she takes a ball, and makes Ball Stew. Miam miam."

"It sounds good."

Ball Stew sounds like something that could take the world by storm. If I take home a sample, Bobetta and Bill could become the most famous gnomes in. The. World.

# One Day

## Anisha Sahu

If society is so great, then why do many among our generation choose the tip of the knife to sink into our hearts, so deep that it goes past all the memories and love locked away inside it like the chamber of secrets? Why can't we walk hand in hand, one person to another in peace and harmony without gunshots and exploding bombs with no mercy for our brethren?

You look at someone and you hate them and half an hour later they're black and blue wondering what they even did to you. Why would you do that to someone you don't even know? Why is society like this? There are so many questions I want to scream aloud but no words come out, because who would listen to a little eleven-year-old girl? She clearly doesn't know what she's talking about.

But that's the thing – I do.

I used to watch the news when I was younger because their grave voices made me giggle, but I never really understood what they were saying when their voices were all choked by tears, and they used big, fancy words to cover up the ugly truth. Now I'm eleven. I've given up on it because all I hear is the reporter droning on and on about murder and crime and all I hear is pain, sorrow, cries, and begs for mercy that's never given.

Why can't we form an alliance with one another and have each other's backs? Is it so hard to settle for less to gain more? We don't need too much land, just a roof over our heads will suffice- we can have even more, it isn't a problem. We don't need to be at each other's throats because of our addiction to greed and money we don't deserve.

There are hardworking, innocent people out there feeding their family with the money that they earn! This world is so beautiful when we care for it. We only have one – let's do our best with it.

Can't we get along without having to pick up a gun and run? Or flying high up in the sky dropping our bombs and watching bullets shoot through the sky?

Peace. That's the word. It's crazy how one world can solve everything, but it can. Hopefully soon we will all join hand in hand and leave our differences behind.

We can start the beginning of another world – the kind where we are all accepted no matter who we are- one where we can love one another and put the gun down for life.

One day where soldiers can pack away their uniform until it's all dusty and buried at the bottom of their hearts because there is no need for it anymore and all of this if forgotten so that one day when our hair is grey and our time has come, we can all sleep peacefully, undisturbed untroubled.

# Spark Young Writers

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