

Spark

Young Writers



WRITING
WEST
MIDLANDS

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Spark Young Writers Magazine

One of the many things I like about the Spark Young Writers' Magazine is that we rarely impose a theme on the writers -- and we're not all that strict when we do. You'll never get a whole issue where every story, for instance, is about Christmas socks.

Yet even though our only stipulations are that pieces be 500 words or less, and that they are the writer's best work, sometimes a theme does emerge. It's not as overt as if we asked everyone to write about tinsel, yet as you read Issue 29 I think you'll see a common theme.

So many of the pieces have characters who yearn for something more, something better. So many of the writers are looking for a new and better future.

What I deeply love, though, is that even when an issue seems to me to capture one certain mood, the writers do it in radically different ways. So this time we have fantasy, sometimes quite scary fantasy, and we also have the piece that is my Editor's Choice for the issue: Amelie Baker's My Abandoned Flip Flops. Do go read that one, it's on page 4.

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.

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.

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My Abandoned Flip Flops

Amelie Baker

A kick and a flick,
my flip flops are off.

One step forward,
my foot is greeted.

Two steps forward,
my feet in sprinkles.

Sand so warm,
I rush to the sea.

Ouch! A pain so painful.
Peeking out the sand I see,
A pointy shell full of secrets.

Bending down,
I try to reach it,
suddenly it scurries away.

I follow the shell,
until the sun sleeps.
AHA! I hold on tight,
and from the shell,
are bright red legs.

One step forward,
My foot is greeted.

Two steps forward,
my feet in water.

Sand so cosy,
I drop him in.

Take him home,
said dad,
so that's what I did.

You Will

Maisie Evason-Genn

Tomorrow night, when the moon is at its fullest and the wind howls, you are going to wake.
Fear will try to choke you and force you out of your blacked room, pulling you as if you were
a tiger on a leash.

Or at least you will think it's your room.

Your feet will drag you downstairs like a spell washed over your body. Or at least you won't
know it's a spell. Cold will try to freeze you, fear will try to trick you, but your feet will
march on.

Or at least you will think you will march on.

Still in your night cap, the courtyard will appear, shadows will dance the sacred ritual, but
you will be rooted to the ground as if chains wrapped around your fluffy purple slippers
keeping you at bay.

Or at least you won't think you can move.

You will line up. You will recite. You will summon. You will resurrect. You will do it.

And after your purpose has been fulfilled, you will be sacrificed to the beast. You will try to
run.

Or at least you think you will.

The Dream

Nadia Sabki

She'll cook an' she'll clean
She'll refill the washing machine
She'll dust out the house
She will chase out the mouse
But what she does best is dream.

Echoes of Yesterday

Zoe Davies

(Bertie sits on a chair, narrator beside him)

Nurse: Bertie? (She holds a box) Your son found a box of your things. He'll be through in a moment.
Narrator: Bertie gropes inside the box, feeling for something. And he finds it. His fingers curl around cool metal. He lifts the rifle from the box. It's familiar. Fingers closing around the trigger, he pulls, waiting for the bang. But it's not filled. However that wasn't the case seventy-eight years ago...

(It's World-War-Two. Bertie clutches his gun.)

Narrator: Bertie listened to war. Somewhere, he heard footsteps, getting closer.

(A man walks up behind Bertie. His brother, Edward.)

Narrator: his fingers closed around the trigger. This time, there's a bang. (Edward crumples)

(Change to a funeral. Edward lies, his arms crossed over his chest.)

Funeral Director: here lies Edward Wilson. 1920-1944.

Narrator: who died aged twenty-four, shot by his own brother, who was too blind to tell friend from foe.

(Bertie kneels beside Edward. A woman takes his hand and leads him under an arch.)

Priest: we are here today to witness the marriage of these two individuals.

Narrator: this is Irene. She loves Bertie, and Bertie loves her.

Priest: You may kiss the bride!

(They lean in, but two children burst through them. The children play a game of tag, parents looking on.)

Bertie: describe them to me.

Irene: bright blue eyes.

Narrator: as blue as the sky

Irene: chubby cheeks

Narrator: dimples

Irene: fringes plastered to their foreheads

Narrator: sticky with sweat

Irene: they are beautiful. Like you.

Narrator: they were a beautiful couple. However, like all beautiful things, it couldn't, and wouldn't, last.

(Irene clutches her chest, sinking to the ground.)

Bertie: (panicked) Irene?

(Change to funeral. Irene lies)

Narrator: (grimly) this looks familiar.

Funeral Director: Here lies Irene Wilson. 1925-1965.

Narrator: who died aged forty due to heart failure, beside her loving husband.

(Bertie kneels beside Irene, his children with him. His son stands.)

Son: Dad? (He leads Bertie to his seat.)

Narrator: here he is. Back to reality. His son's come to visit him. (Bertie tugs a photograph from the box)

Bertie: What's this?

Son: you and mum. On your wedding day.

Bertie: describe her to me.

Son: bright blue eyes

Narrator-and-Son: as blue as the sky

Son: a dazzling smile

Narrator: dimples

Bertie: a beautiful laugh.

Narrator: like a bell on the wind

Bertie-and-Son: beautiful hugs.

Narrator: the best hugs imaginable.

Bertie: I loved her. I guess I'll join her soon.

Narrator: Bertie speaks lightly, as if only talking about joining her for a walk. The son knows this isn't the case.

Son: dad, don't talk like that.

Bertie: I love you (he kisses his son on the cheek)

(Change to a funeral. Bertie lies in a coffin.)

Funeral Director: here lies Albert Wilson. 1925-2023.

Narrator: who died aged ninety-eight due to old age. His brother and wife have waited for him. He's taken his time, but they don't mind. Together, they embark on their next great adventure.

(Blackout)

Four Leaf Luck

Darcey Bayliss

Look, into the fields, to rainbows of nature. I look for the flowers, faces amongst a barrage of clovers. I see three leaves, two leaves, one leaf none of four. Four, four, four, Four.

I think now of all times I need a wish, or all may be lost. Before I gave up my wish came true.

One day a person walked down my street, he looked at me and I looked at him. He smiled to stop and see me. I wanted him. He wanted me, or so I thought.

One day in the flower filled fields I saw a sight like none other. A four leaf luck! A pluck was all it took for my wish to be granted. I asked it the pressing question that had been gripping me for months on end, does he want me?

The answer that came back was a short stabbing, no.

Gogogrow and the Spaceship

Jacob Joseph Gallant

Once upon a time, there lived a little alien, called Gogogrow, who was fast asleep, in his house on planet Vafas. He was green all over, had one eye, ten arms and hands, and two mouths — one for drinks, one for food. Whilst he was asleep a person pulled up on his drive and fired his life ray at Gogogrow's teddy bear, Jake, which was in the garden. Gogogrow woke with a startle as he heard a rumbling sound from his spaceship taking off. Gogogrow quickly rushed out to his garden and saw that his spaceship had gone, he looked around and could not see anyone there. The person had vanished.

Gogogrow quickly went to his shed and started looking for parts to build a new spaceship. The shed was a black rectangle with one window and one door. He was throwing parts everywhere whilst looking for items of certain shapes: rectangles, circles, and hexagons. He then held up each part to a picture, on the magnetic wall, to see if it was right. Gogogrow then started building, by putting them on top of each other and using his magic hands to make them stay together and turned them into a spaceship. Gogogrow then added the secret part, fire, to the spaceship to make him go faster. The roof of the shed opened and Gogogrow used his grappling hook to pick up the spaceship and lift it into the garden.

Gogogrow climbed into his new spaceship and sat down. He pressed a green circle button and a white circle switch. The spaceship then started to shake and rumble. A countdown started – 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – and then blasted off. Gogogrow started to chase after the other spaceship. He pressed the button for the secret part to make him go faster.

He catches up to the other spaceship and he puts the one he is in onto auto-pilot. Gogogrow then opened the hatch and uses his magic powers to connect the old spaceship to his new spaceship. He then zooms back to planet Vafas.

Once he has landed on his planet he climbs out of the new spaceship and into the old one and picks up his grey teddy bear from the chair and gives it a cuddle. He then goes back to his house to bed with his teddy. Then Gogogrow and Jake go back to sleep.

King of Heaven

Prabhleen

The Obelian empire was the most powerful nation known on the western hemisphere, no one dared to declare war. Every descent of that throne was known as respectable and responsible, able to maintain the empire's stability.

Unfortunately, when Athanasius ascended to the throne, the empire began to fall apart as he didn't complete his royal duties.

Someone took his place, Claude de Alger Obelia. He killed the previous emperor and took the role as King. People couldn't complain or say anything because they knew the new emperor would slice their throats in a matter of seconds, but he did fall in love. It wasn't a woman, no, it was an extremely charming man.

He had lengthy fluffy black hair as with his electric violet orbs. Claude didn't know how he fell in love. Maybe because he was an emperor of an another empire, at first it was about alliance but they became good friends and Claude was the first to fall in love.

He didn't want to admit it but he was truly in love.

Frontline from Back Home

Maisie Evason-Genn

His eyes widened as the words shot through
Every sound surging deeper into the scene
Where the mud and letters took over
Where every man stood a soldier

His hands locked tight to his brother
As the unread letters fell
With panicked cries and chilling thuds
But his eyes only saw the blood

His pain he shared with that letter
A fragment of his father's love
The stanzas he read and the songs he played
But the last scream and bullet stayed

His loss so great that every step
Echoed the hole inside his chest
So young and sweet yesterday
But he became a man that day

The Best Detective

Kobie Yan Yu Yip

There has been a new detective in Stationery Town, and she is the best detective in the universe, Detective Meow! She lives in this town at number 123 Meow Road. She solves every question that cannot be solved by others, at first, people do not believe in her but by solving some of their problems they started believing her!

On a beautiful, peaceful morning, there was a loud ringing sound all around their office, Cat-Cat shout to Detective Meow to wake up so Detective Meow rapidly got dressed and yelled 'I am ready!' Then they ran to the customer's house and start writing down notes in her notebook about what happened.

Apparently, the customer, Mr. Ice Cream has lost a tub of sweet, smooth ice cream from his ice cream truck! They both promised to Mr. Ice cream that they will find the tub of ice cream back!

They went through different tough challenges like the mysterious cave, the massive zone of danger, river hazard and mount wild, they need to climb the mount wild and get across river hazard and through the mysterious cave to the massive zone of danger with the most dangerous, wild animals you could ever imagine, like tigers, lions, sharks, hazardous snakes but most importantly, without the cage! You could never know what the animals will do to you, but you just make sure they have eaten their lunch!

After a humongous number of adventures, they finally found Mr. Ice Cream's precious ice cream made with Mr. Ice Cream's secret extra special delicious and tasty ice cream recipe ! (I can show you the recipe for sure, but do not tell Mr. Ice Cream!)

After a day of amazing and fun adventures, Detective Meow and Cat-Cat both got extremely tired. When they got back into their office, they immediately lay down on their soft, comfortable big bed.

The Life of Marmite

Ismaeel Hussain

Hello! My name is Marmite, but my enemies call me Never Bought. Can you guess why? Yes, I'm just never picked. I'm in aisle three with Peanut Butter, Jam and Honey.

Can you stop talking, Mr. Never Bought? Someone is coming.

Oh, why don't you be quiet, Mr. Honey. You think you're better than everybody else.

Well, certainly nobody likes you because half of your family are still here. And the other half have expired while my family of Honey are off and sitting in the premium place of a cupboard waiting to be spread onto some crispy crunchy toast.

Well, Mr. Honey, we will see because I'm on a discount today. PB, how are you feeling?

I'm feeling sick and I'm going to expire within the next few minutes. Please give me your blessing and I will see you in the afterlife with all of the other brothers and sisters we have lost.

Here she comes! Please pick me, please pick me!

There goes Jam and I hated him. PB. PB? Nooooo! PB. Why did you leave us so soon? Well, that's enough acting. Now there is less competition for me. Now it's between me and Honey. Oh, what's that noise? Kids screaming down the supermarket aisles drives me up the wall. I need to get out of here. Oh, wait, no! Don't pick him, not another Honey being picked.

Hey Marmite, guess you won't be missing your Marmy since you won't be going anywhere, haha. Wait, what? Why have you turned back towards the shelf? Don't put me back, don't leave me here with him.

Haha, to be picked and then put back, how embarrassing. Yes, they are coming for me. Don't pick him. It's not looking sweet for you now, is it Honey?

Can't believe Marmite has been picked over Honey...

The Eternal Mystery

Lily Keeley

Thousands of years ago, in another realm, there stood a grand forest. The forest would've taken your breath away, it was absolutely exquisite. The trees dominated the woodland, making everything in its path look minuscule. The sun shone through the prickly, evergreen-coloured Douglas fir leaves, always creating a sense of enchantment and allure. The air was fresh and there was an eternal peaceful breeze. The leaves always rustled softly as the wind carried the scent of damp earth and pine needles through the dense canopy above. The transcendent forest had once held many beauties, like rare types of birds, rare types of plants and rare types of flowers.

Located in the heart of the forest was a quaint village. The cottages were small, but well decorated with ivy vines engulfing the outer walls. While the forest and village had beauty to them, the villagers had the most beauty in the sense that they were the nicest, friendliest, and most helpful people you could ever wish to meet. Whether it was growing crops, working at the market, sewing clothes, or teaching, all of the villagers, including the children, worked. The villagers had always been like this and they'd strictly abided by the rules, people rarely rebelled.

While it was a breathtaking and enchanting place, everything in the forest, from the trees and ground to the air, held a secret. The forest was ruled by Hecate, the Goddess of Witchcraft and Magic. She had cast a spell on the forest, keeping everyone who ever stepped foot in it, imprisoned for eternity. Those birds were 8ft-tall beasts, ready to attack at any time. The flowers were so delicate and graceful-looking, but they had poisonous vipers that were released when touched and could kill anyone, no matter how big or small.

Most of the plants were monstrous, bloodthirsty Venus Flytraps who devoured anything and anyone in its path. They had stood at no less than 12ft tall and 5ft wide.

Hecate tortured the innocent people and kept them there for her own amusement. Not many people tried to escape as it would've led to their impending doom. The dark and dangerous, bloodthirsty creatures who lived there, guarded the forest and village walls. As well as that, even if someone had snuck past these creatures, they would've been dead before they could find their way out, as traps lay hidden along the woodland.

Even with all of the information, no one knows how the story ended. Did the villagers escape? Was anyone else imprisoned? Does the forest still exist? These are questions that'll forever be left unanswered.

Meteor

Alex Jones

Once in a magical land called Nal, there lived a boy called George. George was a tall, young schoolboy and was really creative. In his room stood a large, majestic shelf with lots and lots of Lego, wooden models and lots of nuts and bolts.

Millions of people lived in Nal. It was a place of dreams with flying cars, jumping taxis, hover bikes and much, much more. In the center of Nal stood a much bigger shelf than the one in George's room, with winning models people have won with over the years. None of George's were there. He would love to have one there because everyone looked up at it.

The year of 3034FT (fantasy time) started the same as any other year until there was a chance to get your model on one of the shelves. The news spread around George's school in a flash. Homework was cancelled so the students could work on their models.

On deadline day, the clocks struck 12AM and the trumpet went through the land. Everyone woke up and raced to the town square.

As George made it to the town square, so did everyone else. And he was at the back of the queue. It took hours and hours to get to the front and, at the front, you just dropped your model on a slow moving conveyor belt which took every model to the warehouse.

The next day, the panel looked at all the tiny details. After hours of deciding who would win, they wrote the winner's name in an envelope and they were gathered in the town square to announce the winner. George took a deep breath but before the panel could announce the winner ... "Meteor!" screamed a voice as they pointed to a giant rock in the sky.

"AAAAAAA!" screamed more voices.

"Oh no," said the panel in disbelief.

George ran like a cheetah back to his house on the north of the land. George found some wood, cardboard, elastic bands and also some nuts and bolts. He placed them in his bag and sprinted back.

George started to build a catapult and his plan was to pull the lever just as the meteor was about to hit the world and so send it back to its home planet. It was time... BANG the meteor hit the world!

"Bye," called George, waving goodbye as the catapult had worked. Sadly, when the meteor hit the catapult, the catapult broke into smithereens. "I'm alive!" screamed George as the people of Nal threw George into the sky. They were so happy because of his bravery.

George won the competition with the catapult as even though it had been broken. It was a real sight to see!

Magpie

Evie Smith

I, a magpie, have flown high above many streets,
yet your dove-wings once caught my eye.
Magpies are notoriously fond of shiny treats.
Do you see the way you shimmer when you fly?
The magpie's motivations, endlessly told,
Simple birds as they are,
they can't resist anything made of gold;
little did I know, that meant your heart.
For the first time, I wanted to see the ground,
Because life down there fit you like silk gloves.
The magpie's wings were a dark blue background,
Fit to stay as such for the starry shine of the dove's.
Nothing, I concur, could've compared to the sight,
of your wings' iridescent thrill.
The magpie's wings were of the night,
but the dove's were from even higher still.
My wings weren't always patchwork,
in fact, they were once the deepest navy blue.
But I only saw a blank canvas for artwork.
They're white because I wanted to be like you.

When you sit down next to me in the mundane,
it's like it's the first time –
I feel that I'm meeting you all over again.
This time, there are no feathers in sight.
I see parts of you in me,
and ever the same reversed.
Part of your golden heart is all I want to be,
Chasing it would make me a magpie at worst.

Our eyes meet,
A single heartbeat.

You smile when you look back at me,
but your expression says so much more than you know.
Your dove-eyes are so confused yet carefree.
You must wonder why I stare at you so.
I smile and look away as I feel my feathers fall through,
My grin isn't a copy of yours – now I can see:
Maybe all that I see when I look at you,
you see when you look at me.

New Elf's Guide to Santa's Workshop

Olivia Hussey

Hello, or should I say Ho Ho Ho to all of our new elves! This article will be published on www.Santa'sElves.co.NorthPole and there will be copies in the room opposite my office (I need to remind Twinkle to use a different type of ink this time so the whole article won't smudge).

Now, you may be thinking, how hard can it be to succeed in being one of my excellent elves? Well it's a very exhausting job, but all of your efforts will be worthwhile on Christmas Day when we see every child's face etched with glee!

The purpose of this article is to give you a detailed insight into my wonderful workshop – how it runs, the environment inside and outside and some important notices for all elves. I hope you enjoy reading this and if you have any queries, please come to me directly or ask one of my most trusted elves – Sparkles (Elf 143).

Magically nestled underneath a thick, pure blanket of snow, which is the perfect canvas for snow angles, my wonderful workshop emits a sweet aroma of peppermint and you can hear our talented choir create a beautiful harmony of Christmas Carols from miles away.

In order to reach the colossal Brunswick green doors that have stars carved into them, you must follow these instructions very carefully. Firstly, you will need to walk up the golden ladders (to the left of the secret location that has already been revealed to you). Once you have done this, you will see a long path of icy stepping stones; you need to cross this, but be cautious when you get to the ninth one as it's slippery.

After crossing the 17 stones, three gingerbread men will greet you – Buddy, Merry and Star. Don't worry, they're giant but very friendly! However, these gingerbread also take on a crucial role: patrolling the site to ensure no impatient children try to peep through into the workshop. They will ask you for your Elf ID Card and inform you what your tasks for that day will be.

Once they tell you the daily rota, the entryway to the building of magic is revealed. Please go to your allocated station, (new elves usually start at Station 23 – meticulously wrapping each gift and adding a sparkly ribbon). It is imperative that you refuel the toy cars with hot chocolate if they approach you as they are the lifeline for communication here.

At 13:40, each elf has to select three children's factfiles and inform Angel (Elf 96) of their address so she can carefully plan my route for the exciting delivery of presents that will bring so much elation. However, please ensure that you are cautious when approaching the towering bookshelf as the tall ladder can be very wobbly and there's often a few toy trains that have left their track.

This is all I have time for now, but I am looking forward to meeting you all very soon!

Kind Regards,

Santa

Whisper Lodge – To Educate a Dream

Simran Kaur

I dream a dream within a life of mine
Where there be strife of time,
Where the wind be blowing rife as it would
pine,
Where the Arête pokes up as a knife as it will
dine

In the golden dream of Whisper Lodge.
When I wake in the early morn,
I wander in the lonely dawn,
As settled is the yearly fawn,
Yet I be a restless form.

I dream a mask of hobbled queen,
Where I yearn to learn and to dream,
Where I yearn for words to be as they seem,
Where ripples come with sun beams

In the way of Whisper Lodge.
A lady wandering where there is none,
Where I be and make up one,
Where I yearn for words anon,
There to be settled thereupon.

I yearn for books to reach me,
Yearn for learning to let me see,
Yearn to dance, a dream within a life to be,
Mine to dance with veil free

In the place of Whisper Lodge.
In present time when all be masked,
When men and women thus be tasked,
There be questions, yearnings asked,
Where the golden sun thus basked.

I yearn to live a life beyond,
Where free is the settled pond,
The wind is in the friendly bond,
Of life in play with golden frond,

Of a dream of Whisper Lodge.
But I dream a dream within a life of mine,
High be it that I do climb,
Where there be nothing, only a dream of time,
Where I sit and foolish do I pine.

I do not now dream of Whisper Lodge, for it is
far away,
I do not dream a fantasy in such a way,
For be there no time this day,
I dream a real thing, a concept by which to
play:

There be no Whisper Lodge!
I dream a present, not a past,
So that it may then last,
There where words with power hast,
Take to my mind on great mast.

I dream a dream of real things,
Of silent bells with silent rings,
In life I think of books, it sings,
I read what life brings.

I do not dream of Whisper Lodge.
I live and laugh in splendour of the airy,
Gentle be the dancing fairy,
Singing is the bird called Mary,
I be awake, I be not weary,

I have a path, a long way to travel,
Snow becomes the silent gravel,
There the twining rope doth unravel,
There is a sound so like a gavel.

I build a place of Whisper Lodge.
Where there I sigh with steady head,
Where there be the flower bed,
Where I hear the cry of morn where it is
said,
"I build a path to walk instead!"

Escape Through Pages

Olivia Hussey

As laughter and sunshine fill the room,
I linger around in solitary gloom.
Another day spent playing alone in the yard,
another year passes, still no birthday card.

If only I had the diamond eyes – blue like the whimsical waves of the ocean,
and the gorgeous sandy locks to complete the perfect child potion.
But I am stuck with this drab chestnut mane,
and the yearning for crystal blue eyes causes me pain.

As I sit daydreaming in my locked room on my own,
I start to ponder if I really do have a place to call home.
When I grow up, my family won't want to know my name,
because I don't want to take a path to fame.

However, the library is my saving refuge,
and the love and inclusion I feel here is huge.
Towering shelves packed with vast tomes of brilliant books,
it is so nice to be in a place where the main focus is not looks.

Each book tells a unique tale,
and everyone is welcome here - male and female.
I enjoy embarking on this journey of imagination,
filled with fears, joys and endless trepidation.
I adore meeting all of these magical creatures,
taking note of their distinct features.

But most importantly, books are my escape from reality,
All I need is my Prince Charming to save me from life's catastrophe.
Sadly, I know it's unlikely to happen,
And it's something that I can only imagine.

Bobby the Brave

Bobby Humphries

The snowflake landed on my nose, and I came out of the ambulance.
It was raining in the hospital,
And it smelled cold and medical.
The snowflake was like a beautiful star
And it was amazing to see it snow.
I could hear the snow glistening outside
Flying happily in the air.
Inside, it was raining.

Spark Young Writers

For more information about the
work Writing West Midlands
does with young people, please see

sparkwriters.org