

Spark

Young Writers



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Spark Young Writers Magazine

Thirty issues ago, "Spark Young Writers' Magazine" set out to of course be a great read, but also to give young writers what might be their first professional credit. You can send just about anything in to the magazine, but it will be treated the same way that the magazine's same editors work with adult and experienced writers.

Except as a professional magazine writer myself, I can tell you what you may already know and can certainly guess: it is incredibly hard to write for a title when the brief is that you can send just about anything in. Yet this edition is bursting with prose and poems that are exceptional reads, and which also reveal so much about their writers.

Sometimes also their writers' parents. I'm thinking of "Family" by Philippa Lagneau on page 21 there. You'll see.

But if I urge you to read that, and I urge you read all of the issue, do start with "You Didn't Notice" by Ruby on page 4. That poem has been in my head since I read it right at the start of editing this issue and it is my editor's choice for the 30th Spark Young Writers' Magazine.

William Gallagher, editor



Cover image is "A Girl with Flowers on the Grass"
by Jacob Henricus Maris
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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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You Didn't Notice

Ruby

You didn't notice when you were younger
And you used to watch the raindrops fall,
Pretending they raced for the last time

You didn't notice when you put your arms inside your shirt
And said you had no arms
For the last time

You didn't notice when you shouted 'daddy's home'
And he'd pick you up and swing you around
For the last time
When you'd pretend to be asleep in the car
So that mum would carry you inside for the last time,
When you went on a play date for the last time
When you mixed things together to make a potion for the last time

You didn't notice that your first pet wouldn't be your last
And that your grandparents
Didn't last forever

You didn't notice when your Christmas list stopped being those
Mythical thoughts, but instead material wish lists,
You didn't notice when you went to a princess party for the last time
Or when you leafed through a picture book for the last time.

You didn't notice when you stopped believing your imaginary friends were real
Or the last time you slept with all your toys, so nobody felt left out

But I bet you notice now
I bet you notice everything now

Being Shy

Adriana

My friend is shy like a mouse,
Her world is quiet and small,
She looks like she is invisible,
Hiding in that corner,
Being made fun all the time,
She doesn't like to share, I swear.
She hides her head behind her hood,
And puts her feet around her chair,
She keeps her book right beside her,
She is very friendly when you get to know her.
For an insult is never far away, oh dear.

But I swear, she is strong inside that hood of hers...

We Live in a World

Ruby McKie

We live in a world,
Where it's hard to turn away,
From the buzzing of the TV screen.
We walk around with pounding headaches,
And the echo of a ticking clock.

When the sea water is hotter than a bathtub,
We close our eyes,
Let them tie the blindfold,
Spin around three times,
And we point to the people in the boats,
Plug our ears at their cries.

The sky is red,
The clouds are black
We shut the curtains,
What a lovely summer.

Winter and Spring

Tapiwa Mpedzisi

Winter's wicked rule in the woodland had its icy impact: the trees lost all their leaves, the animals hid underground for mere warmth and all the birds flew to down south to somewhere sunny, and because of that, the wood became a very silent place, only the noiseless sound of snowflakes floating to the ground and the faint wind was heard.

Whilst for Winter, her heart was colder than herself. She did not care about the woods nor its inhabitants as long as she spent her turn on freezing the woodlands, transforming it into a winter prison instead of a wonderland; she would feel very fulfilled.

Today, just like another other day, Winter did her daily routine: freezing, she froze the lakes, shrivelled the trees up with frost and then layered the forest with a heaping of snow, freezing the poor animals. Then with a flick of her wrist, she magicked herself a bejewelled mirror (out of ice, of course), and there she was, vainly praising herself: "Oh, aren't I the most beautiful and gorgeous season ever!"

She flaunted herself checking out her sharp facial features. "I just know the other mundane seasons are jealous of me!" she cackled boastfully.

Winter laughed and laughed until she saw another spirit in the distance: it wasn't icy like her but warm and flowery. "Spring..." she groaned. "What do you want here?" she moaned.

"Nothing," Spring sang, "I was just here to tell you it's my turn now."

"YOUR TURN!" she screamed highly, shattering icicles. "I haven't even finished!"

Spring looked around the forest. *Unfinished? This looks way way more than just finished*, she thought, while the snow melted under her flowery dress "You have done more than enough, Winter! Maybe have a break." She giggled. "You look very tired; I see bags under your eyes," she said.

"WAIT, REALLY?" shrieked Winter in fear, while looking at herself in the mirror searching for any imperfections,

"And if you want those to go away, I suggest you rest, I've got this now," Spring giggled, while leading Winter to her ice crystal sleigh.

"OK, but you better not mess with anything, not even a single speck," Winter warned sternly, then with a click of her sharp fingers, her sleigh flew away.

"What a beauty drama queen," Spring chuckled, and as she lifted her hands up, the snow at once melted, making a joyful atmosphere, then the trees grew their leaves back, but now with pretty flowers to adorn it, then the grass grew and was splattered with daffodils, roses, and petunias.

"You can come out now," she sang sweetly, and soon mice, rabbits, and all sorts appeared and began to roam freely under the glorious golden sun. The forest was soon full of sounds as the cheerful birds came back singing in beautiful harmonies, ready to welcome their queen of the forest with a crown of flowers.

"Welcome back, Queen Spring!" they all announced.

A Name from a Book

Sophie Nock

My name is that of a woman in a book
long gone from my parents' shelves.
Yesterday it was about a Russian princess,
today a spy – perhaps both,
they'll say tomorrow
if I point out the inconsistency.

Had I been a boy
I might never have had a name.
No decision had been made
on what they would call a son.

I wonder if a name has such power
that it began my love of learning;
if a Philosophy degree was in my future
the second the birth certificate was signed.

I should like to find the book
from which my name was borrowed,
but I have far too small a clue.

Others have stories about their naming:
family legacies or tales of woe.
I just have a book, whose title I will never know.

13 Snake Street, Turtle Town

Malena Vazquez Bianchini

The attic. The darkest of places. So dark, even monsters don't dare to step foot in there.

Gizmo was new to Turtle Town. Too new to know... She had just bought house number 13 on Snake Street. No one had lived there, since the family who did, vanished on a late night on the 13th of June.

As Gizmo had just settled to bed with her sausage dog Ketchup, she heard footsteps. She jumped out of bed, her body invisible in the pitch black of the night. She snatched a torch from her desk and grabbed at the door.

Once she was in the dark corridor, click: she turned on her torch. The darkness was soon filled with light of courage. She walked down the corridor, creak by creak.

As she did, the noises were getting louder and louder.

When she could hear the noise was right above her she looked up. The roof plate was out of place and there were dents on the floor below. She picked up a nearby mop and poked the roof and as she had hoped, the plate opened up and let down a group of steps that led up into the attic.

She slowly climbed up into the attic. That's when she heard that the footsteps were not just one pair, but three! Gizmo looked down onto the floor and saw that not too far from her current position were 6 marks on the dusty floor which were completely clean. They were shoe prints! And they were getting closer!

Gizmo screamed and then felt herself start falling. She was falling through the newly broken floorboards! Then she felt something big and cold grip her hand. The next moment, she was back safely on the attic floor, lying on her belly.

She stood up to see three ghosts. A man, a woman and a young girl, about 6 years old. They had saved her from near death! She ran to them and hugged them. They weren't very nice to hug as they were cold and moist but they had saved her life.

That's when, out the corner of her eyes, she saw a painting of the family who had lived in the house before. The three people in the painting were the same as the three ghosts she was hugging. They were the family that had disappeared! From then on, nobody was scared of the 13th house on Snake Street.

Where Did Safari Go?

Gia Oubhie

“Where did she go?” Lila asked, scratching her little, button nose as hard as she could.

“I don’t know. She has just vanished. Into thin air. She was here the week before, and then she wasn’t,” I replied, sprinting over to William’s house.

“Go on, ring it!” Lila said, excitedly clutching my arm. It wasn’t exciting for me. It was painful.

His house was on a little road and all of the houses were joined together. I rang the doorbell, no answer. I rang it again, no answer.

“He must not be home. We can ask him tomorrow at the Young Writers Group,” I said.

Lila sighed and leaned against the door as if it was magically going to open. Just at that moment, the door creaked open.

“Lila! What did you do? You broke the door!” I yelled, pushing her to one side.

Her eyes filled with fresh tears, “I just leaned on it a tiny bit. I’m sorry.” she said, her nose turned a red sort of colour, just as it always does before she cries.

Just then, a horrifying scream filled my ears. It was definitely coming from William’s house.

“Stay here,” I whispered, stepping into the house.

It was dimly lit with pictures of William with a black cat. It had orangey eyes that stared through my soul. Most of the pictures were of him, but a fair few of the cat.

I entered the kitchen, the most horrible thing I have ever seen appeared right in front of my eyes. William was standing over a dead Safari. But that wasn’t all I could see, he was clutching a knife with blood dripping down it.

He turned to face me, I didn’t know what to do but run. I ran out of the house, and grabbed my sister’s hand.

What would I say at the Young Writer’s Group tomorrow?

All I could do was run.

Why My School is Monster School

Bess Titchener

I am convinced that everybody in Wellhouse Middle School is actually a monster. Here’s some proof.

Today in PE, we were playing dodgeball, and I was just aiming a ball at Jack when I overheard Max and Thomas having a conversation. “I’m really sorry, Thomas!” Max said, “I didn’t mean to hit you in the face! I thought you were a spider!”

Maybe Thomas would have replied, if he were a normal person, “How did you think I was a spider?!?” But no, Thomas replied, with a laugh, “Ha, don’t worry, it’s happened before.”

I was so confused.

Firstly, why did Max think Thomas was a spider. Secondly, why had others thought he was a spider before? I don’t think I would ever know.

That’s only one of the crazy things that I have seen at this creepy school. I’ll tell you more.

On a school picture day, two friends, Michael and Allaya, were competing to see who could have the ugliest photo. Firstly, why would they do that? Do they want to express their inner monster? When we finally got our results back, we searched through for Michael and Allaya’s, obviously.

Michael’s was ugly. He pulled a funny face and he stuck his fingers in his ears and nose. Yuck! But Allaya’s was not only ugly, but her eyes were white and the fingers on her face were gruesome claws. I quickly asked her about this, and she said, “I don’t see it. Are you saying I’m disgusting.”

I said no, but I thought yes.

More stories? OK. If you really are not sure yet that my school is not a monster, I’ll tell you a few more stories.

In the girl’s changing room at PE, we were just getting changed. I had a weird tingly feeling climbing up my back. I spun around. Lulu was about to walk past the mirror. She did. Normal, right? No. There was no Lulu in the mirror when she passed it. Now that’s a monster, you must agree!

Still, you are not so sure. OK, maybe we should take it a step further, if you are going to be like this.

I was chatting with my best friend Megan, before she suddenly stopped to say she needed the toilet. Most people would have just let their best friend go, but not me. I said, “OK, I’m just going to the cafeteria.” Of course, I wasn’t.

I followed her, into the school, trying to be sneaky. She turned around and I jumped into a big group of random people in my year. They looked at me weirdly. I awkwardly shuffled out. I continued to follow Megan. Suddenly, she walked into a random wall and disappeared.

I hope you now realise my school is full of monsters. Am I the only human?

Our Great Detective

Sharlene Clement

Our great detective
Eyes as sharp as a pencil,
Brain as complicated as space,
We can all rely on
Our great detective.

From dull and unpredictable,
He hears the news of crime,
Here's the person we know,
our great detective.

With his friend by his side,
he sets for the scene of crime.
what does everybody call him,
our great detective.

He smokes a cigar pipe,
his chin pokes out,
the smartest person in England,
that's our great detective.

Stars

Bethan Ellis

I am in the countryside, looking up at the night sky
A full moon, glistening and bright
Surrounding it, are little specks of light
Stars, yes, that's right

It's so different to home, the city where the sky is
Black and grey
But then I am strapped in the car and taken away
Back to my home with the streetlights on
Giving me this feeling and I want to run

Out of the city and far away
Back to the countryside
So that's where I will stay

Where forever I can see
That beautiful sight
In my new home
Until the end of my time

Winter

Lily Brayford-Hughes

Winter snowflakes fall,
Roads glitter like diamonds,
Nobody is outside
The ice covers the pond
Everything is silent
Roses are far from sight

Down in the winter wonderland
Roses are far from sight.

Waiting

Grace Sudlow

*11th November, 1918. 10:55am
Feckenham, Worcestershire*

I lean on the garden gate, looking out across the village green at the large church clock, high on the steeple. Its hands inch towards that important number: 11am.

The chill, autumn wind rustles through the trees, catching the hem of my dress and spreading it out like a sail. The wind also carries something else: the sound of a tiny beak tapping against the dry stone wall.

I watch the robin as it hops along to my elbow. I look down at it. "Hello, little fellow," I whisper. "Waiting for the bells?"

The robin blinks solemnly at me. I look back at the church clock. The minute hand has edged closer to the all-important hour.

The robin hops up and down on the wall. Its beak opens and it gives a little squeak.

"Come on," I whisper, willing the minute hand onward.

One minute to 11.

I take a deep breath, my mind flying to France, Tom, and all of Europe, waiting for that same chime.

Dong.

"One," I count along with the clock. "Two...three...four...five."

The robin seems more excited than ever.

"Six...seven...eight...nine."

My hands clench.

"Ten...eleven."

The minute hand lands firmly on 12.

"Yes," I cry, clapping my hands. "Yes!!! At last!!!"

The robin begins to sing.

The Olive Tree

Amelie Edmondson

Olive was my name.

Now I have no name. My paintings are still on my desk, one half-finished and lightly taped to the table. I didn't like to tape it too much as mother said it would peel the varnish off the dresser. No one has moved my cup of paint water; dust is settling on top of it. Dust is settling on me.

Mother sits in the kitchen. The wine is on the table, but it hasn't been touched. Was she even planning on drinking it? Her eyes are dark, and I don't remember them any other way. It must be hard to see my face every day, propped up like a porcelain doll. She looks up, her eyes clouded with tears. She looks at me as if I'm still here. But she cannot bear to look at what she knows was her fault.

I look out to the garden, my tree wilting, almost gone. I hoped that I would be well enough to continue to take care of it one day, but here I am, here but also not.

I turn from the window, the floorboards no longer creaking at my footsteps. I am surprised I don't slip through the floorboards, as from novels I believed that someone in my condition would. I haven't gone near the room at the end of the hall since I returned, since I couldn't bear to look at what rested on the bed. I grasp my fingers in my palm and tiptoe in, though I don't know why. It's not like anyone could hear me before this, let alone now. I have to stop.

This is the first time I've properly seen myself.

My eyes stare back at me, as if made of glass with not a soul behind them. My hair sticks up like a wire brush, clearly mother has not bothered to brush it. I sit up stiff against the wall, a ghost of a fidget remaining on my fingers. Stitches stick out from my eyelid like barbed wire, the bruising and swelling only just beginning to go down. I don't think I've left the bed that still smells of chloroform and carbolic since it happened, and I'm collecting dust like my abandoned cup of paint water.

They said I was dangerous. I didn't think so. I was scared. But if I was a danger, I cannot be anymore. My body cannot leave the bed anymore, cured of its dependence on the front of my brain.

So now I wonder, not quite a person and not quite a spirit, wondering why I could not have just withered, like my precious olive tree.

Black Tom

Liliwen Joy

The clock strikes midnight.

Carefully you pad down the driveway;

You stop.

Your haunches go down before you leap.

As light as a feather, you land on the wall.

Suddenly you hear a hiss!

Your hackles rise as you search the street below;

You can't see anything.

Like a shadow you dart across the wall;

Carefully you jump down and slink round a corner.

Suddenly your reflective eyes come back into view.

You stop and stare,

Before padding back home

The Worst Children in the World

Chimaobim Ajukwa

In 1999, Mr and Mrs Parrot are going to the hospital because Mrs Parrot is pregnant. Mrs Parrot was in pain, but Mr Parrot said "don't worry, we are nearly there". As Mr Parrot parks his car, Mrs Parrot exclaimed "I can't hold the babies much longer."

The doctors came on time and escorted Mr and Mrs Parrot into a medical room and told Mr Parrot to wait outside.

After a lot of struggling, Mrs Parrot finally delivered the babies and the doctors said to her "Congratulations Mrs Parrot, your babies are here."

The doctors opened the doors and said to Mr Parrot that he can come in to see the babies. He comes in and looks at the babies and says "Well done, I knew you could do it!"

As they left the hospital, Mr Parrot said "I love you," and Mrs Parrot says "I love you too".

As the babies started to grow, Mr and Mrs Parrot gave the babies the names James and Mark.

As James and Mark grew older, they became mischievous. As they went to nursery school, they once stole another child's toy and the child started to cry. Both James and Mark started to laugh at the child.

As they grew even more older, they became even more mischievous. They entered a secondary school called Braintree. The twins made loads of friends and together, James and Mark's friends all plotted against the headteacher, Mrs Hobbles.

The first plot they made was to make Mrs Hobbles sit on a needle. As Mrs Hobbles sat on her chair, she sat on the needle and exclaimed "Ouch, my bottom!".

Plot after plot, James and Mark were successful, until Mrs Hobbles made a speech saying she would leave but she needed to do something first.

James and Mark were sent to Mrs Hobbles's office and Mrs Hobbles opened a bottle of Coke, saying "You didn't think I wouldn't notice?"

James tried to explain it, but Mrs Hobbles shouted "You are banned from this secondary school forever!"

James and Mark were devastated and went straight home. As James and Mark explained what happened to their mom and dad, they were shattered and the parents said "Get out of our house!"

Both James and Mark begged, but their mum and dad pushed them out of their house.

A few months later, James and Mark are on the streets begging for food, water and money; they haven't eaten or drunk in a long time and was on the verge of dying of hunger and thirstiness.

It looked like it was over for the twins but one day, a rich family comes to them and says, "Do you want to be adopted by us?" They both shouted "Yes please!"

So, the rich family took them, transformed their lives and they lived happily ever after.

I Saw the Bigfoot!

Phoebe Hackett

I saw the Bigfoot,
yes, yes, I saw him.
I saw the Bigfoot,
his feet were big and grim.

I saw the Bigfoot,
claws, fur, teeth and all.
I saw the Bigfoot,
he was super tall.

I saw the Bigfoot,
it was like something you'd watch on telly.
I saw the Bigfoot,
and suddenly I was in his belly!!!

Where Do I Long To Be?

Bronwen Holmes

Where do I truly belong?
Always wanting for peace and calm,
Always longing to be free,
I belong inside a forest,
Where nature surrounds me.

Instead, I live inside a house,
I yearn for a tree house instead.
While gaming consoles beep and buzz,
I dream inside my head.

I dream of a land of trickling streams,
Of cascading waterfalls and exotic scents,
Where the sound of television doesn't cut off my dreams,
And toxic fumes don't pollute the air,

When the future dawns,
I will escape,
To the forest of my dreams.
I will choose my own fate.

Family

Philippa Lagneau

Dads are cheesy
They can make you feel queasy
Although, they can be funny
Like a moustache on a bunny
Dads are good at fixing things
And in the shower they like to sing
But when you're feeling down
They will turn your frown right around
Dads give the best hugs
And are brilliant at killing bugs

Mums can't survive without a shopping list
They always make sure we've been kissed
Honestly, they're obsessed with wine
Though after they've had it they can't walk in a line
Mums have the power to do a hundred things at once
And they never let us do dangerous stunts
Mums are always very nice
You can rely on them to get rid of head-lice
They always do jobs around the house
And you know they'd scream if they saw a mouse

Sisters and brothers love to be rough
Their younger siblings think they're so tough
Sometimes they are extra fun
But sometimes they look really glum
They make up super cool games
Though they also call each other bad names
Sisters and brothers are really good
They help you get through childhood
Always looking out for you
Even when you don't have a clue

Babies are really cute
They need to eat mushy fruit
Their hands are so small and tiny
Though they are very whiny
Babies can cry all day and all night
If they ever go to sleep, you tuck them in tight

Family is so brilliant
Together we can be resilient
Everyone in the world is a community
Everyone has that opportunity

Four Seasons

Emma Floristean

It starts with Spring
And that sort of thing
You'll wake with a yawn
Just like a newborn
You'll wake up to sun
Making you leap and run

You pass through the door
Blinded by the light
You look at the sky
But you won't find night
Eating ice-cream by the mass
Is how those hot summer days want to pass
Holidays, beaches all that fun
Is how it also must be done

You run through the gate
No time to wait
You look 'round in awe
Amazed by what you saw
Leaves falling in a flurry
Looking like they really must hurry
The harvest is strong
And it won't be long but
Autumn is lost
At any cost

Winter is here
So no need to fear
The snow is cold
But pulls you in its fold
The snowman looks great
It's not one you hate
You make demands for a hot chocolate in your
Hands
Round and round the cycle will go
Looks like time is your greatest foe
But as memories go these were good to make
Surely ones you will leave in your wake

The Secret is Just One Whisper Away...

Maryam Ahmed

Tundras. Nothing but sleets of vast, treeless ice. Glaciers glitter in the distance and snowy summits can just be seen above thick, malleable clouds. The turbulent, tumultuous seas of consuming waves sprayed water everywhere. Then, sunset arrived, and the night billowed up to swallow the sky. Black bled into the canvas and a tropical, serene sunset curled into a tight ball before disappearing. Night seized the sky rapidly.

Suddenly, a mixture of ethereal teal, vivid purple and luminous turquoise began to paint the firmament, streaks of colours dancing gracefully. They curved like sound waves, playing a mellow, melodious melody of harmony. The twinkling stars (which played hide and seek) quickly flashed a gleaming smile. A skulk trudged towards hills that rolled gently into an icy slope. They trekked upwards fighting against the all-powerful whispering wind. They howled as one...

The immense, spherical moon seemed to shatter as the blood curling yowl stretched up to howl a sonorous sound. Crystal shields fell from the sky, like a mother leaving her child alone: it was unprotected, vulnerable even. There was no mistake. Tonight was the night.

The north star cheekily winked twice, and the Aurora shot down like a ray of sunlight only mesmerising, vibrant and flamboyant. It snatched the formidable skulk up. The world held its breath. They flew up, up, up into the velvet, kaleidoscopic sky and into the moon....

"What do you mean, Master?" a surly man inquired.

A booming laugh rang out. "They are here. And they are about to face a punishment," a hoarse, raspy voice whispered, standing from his opulent, plush throne which loomed above the peasants below him. Gasps. Then, furious, and excited yells.

"You better be ready, Fortis. YOU BETTER BE READY!!"

They had arrived. Insula Lux. Named by an ancient wizard, Insula Lux is Latin for Island of light. A dazzling, bright light blinded sight, for the foxes vanished, and in their place were... humans?

"Ah, we are home! What a joyful occasion this must be!" the leader of the skulk, Oswald, cried, tears smudging his face.

Each person wore shiny armour made from pure silver and diamonds.

The joy did not last long, for a sneering remark allowed them to acknowledge a disturbing presence: the lost king of Insula Lux.

"Yes, I, for one, certainly agree."

Baleful looks were cast. Wrath filled the intimidating silence. Battle cry. They charged. Poison-tipped arrows were shot. Jagged swords brandished. Long knives sliced. Pools of blood smeared the dirty, craggy ground.

Panting, Oswald stumbled towards his skulk. Death came fast for the betrayers. And it came soon after for the King. They had won. But still, there were evil eyes lurking. They knew what impenetrable, occult secrets Insula Lux held. And they were sure to try take them. No matter, the skulk of lupus ballators, wolf warriors, were here to protect Insula Lux.

They always would.

The Oak and The Dandelion

Ahon Ganguly

The young dandelion anxiously stared up at the great Oak tree who stood tall and strong, watching over the still forest. "Will I always be here?" the small flower asked, looking up to the Oak. "No, young sapling, everyone has to die someday..."

The next day

The young dandelion curiously stared up at the great Oak tree, who stood proud over the joyous, bustling forest.

"What about you?" the sapling asked, intrigued. "Me? What do you mean?" The Oak seemed puzzled.

"Will you die as well?"

"Of course, I will!" The sapling seemed shocked at the tree's answer. "Even if I don't wilt normally, these two-legged creatures will chop me down!" The sapling gasped.

The tree continued, smiling, "I have been alive for few centuries, you know!"

The next day

The young dandelion miserably stared up at the great oak tree, who stood exhaustedly, watching over wet and damp forest. The mighty tree, spotted this, "Why are you crying little one?"

"Because... we won't always be here," the sapling sniffled.

The great oak tree pondered for a while, then whispered, "Should I tell you a secret?"

The sapling nodded.

"Not all plants can do what dandelions can. Once they are nearing the end of their lives, all they need is one gust of wind... and their seeds will fly off... adventuring across the world! Then, they will fall into their favourite patch of grass, and before you can say daffodil, one dandelion's seed will have grown into a whole meadow."

Awe-struck, the young flower exclaimed, "Wow! That is so... cool!"

The Oak chuckled. "Take a good rest. Winter will come in few moons, and you will need lots of strength before then..."

One moon later

The old dandelion weakly stared up at the great oak tree, who watched over the bare forest, scared. The deafening noise rang through what was left of the trees. BANG! BOOM! Each tree came crashing down as the great Oak felt not so great anymore.

That day, it rained. It rained hard. It was as if the clouds were begging the two-legged creatures to stop.

The frail old dandelion looked up. "Oh, great oak tree, what is happening?"

"I...I don't know..." The two-legged creature picked up the axe and swung it at the Oak.

The tree fell down... and down... and down... as it landed beside the dandelion.

The old dandelion stared at the oak tree, who was frail and weak. The oak did not dare cry, but the flower did. "Why are you crying my friend?" the oak whispered, croakily.

"I don't want you to go..." the dandelion sniffled.

The oak still smiled, "Well then, we'll go together. The storm is coming and when it does, I will let go and if you wish to, you can too. Spread your seeds and spread your story."

"Will I remember you?"

"If you wish..."

The wind came... and so... they let go.

Winter's Embrace

Ayden Sukri

Trees are bare of leaves
The coldest time of year
Winter ushers in

Snowflakes are falling
The simple pleasures of life
A tranquil life

Signs of Spring

Rosalie W

The animals are coming out of their burrows,
Pansies are blooming too,
The sun is shining all around,
Baby cows are starting to moo.
The grass is green, and moss is twisting up the trees,
Birds are singing their morning song,
The trees are waving their twisty arms,
Days are starting to become very long.
Bees are in the breeze,
Saplings are sprouting out of the ground,
Fluffy clouds covering the sky,
A beautiful blue all around.
These are the signs of spring.

The Day After I Died

Amelie Edmondson

The day after I died,
I strolled into my living room,
and watched my mum watch TV,
her eyes glassy,
still red with tears.
Don't think she was even paying attention to it,
but if she had,
she'd see that the whole country was mourning my tragedy.

The day after I died,
I went to school like I always did,
but I couldn't reach my classroom,
because the hallways were clogged with students,
on their way to my memorial
by the priest with tears in his eyes.
His daughter was my age,
too young.

The day after I died,
I lurked outside the corner shop,
eternally with no money.
The streets were crowded with protesters,
angry on behalf of those like me.
They'd gone too far
this time, the last time.

The day after I died,
I read a newspaper
through the window of a newsagents,
permanently closed.
The British embassy had been burnt to the ground.
We were angry,
and if we paid with life,
they'd pay with property.

The day after I died,
Derry didn't feel the same.
Everyone I saw was sad and angry,
parents, siblings and friends quietly mourning in the streets.
My blood was still on Williams Street,
a splatter of dark red from where I'd tried to run.
The ground was still warm
from where my body had fallen,
only to be trampled by others in danger.

The day after I died,
I sat and watched
my dad on the phone with my gran in Kilkenny,
my peers praying in chapel for my salvation,
mothers crying in the street for their wains,
the photographers capturing our blood on the street,
the wains asking their mothers why the streets were now bloody and tattered,
my name being whispered as a tragedy.

The day that I died,
was the day that the innocent were fired at,
the day that we were made victims but painted as villains,
the day that we decided we'd been pushed to our limit,
and that we'd had enough.

The day that I died,
Bloody Sunday.

“Global Warming isn’t real!”

Ada Whitfield

I watch the polar bears lose their home,
As the Earth becomes a greenhouse dome.
“Global warming isn’t real,”
They say to me.

I watch the birds find it hard to fly,
As dark black smog pollutes the sky.
“Fossil fuels aren’t real,”
They say to me.

I watch green boas lose their lives,
As we cut down their trees, all the time.
“Deforestation isn’t real,”
They say to me.

I watch baby turtles in a trance,
In the huge trash pile the size of France.
“Sea pollution isn’t real,”
They say to me.

I show them all the evidence,
To put a stop to their false pretence.
“Global warming is so real,
There are fossil fuels, can’t you feel?
Deforestation hasn’t just unfurled,
Sea pollution’s all over the world,
So all of it is real,”
I say to them.
But they don’t listen.

“You just sit there on your phones,
While you destroy Earth’s creatures’ homes,
All of it is real,”
I say to them.

But still, they don’t listen.

“Why won’t you adults just listen?
You’re all trapped in tunnel vision.
All of it is real,”
I say to them.

And finally, some of them listen.

Burning Gardens and Broken Waterfalls

David Obasan

Part 1
there are stories of a man with eyes of crimson fire
a flickering desire fuelled by his quest for true power
glares of gluttony those eyes know no rest
for what he truly craves is for the world to finally kneel at his behest,
to ignite this flame in his chest
so those eyes began to search...
then they set
and in the eleventh hour he came to her
and by the twelfth hour he’d left,
the man had laid waste to another’s garden of green,
he trampled and he stole
in the same fields he once swore to protect
and now burned away are the flowers of her soul, a part of her has died
buried in the graveyard that her backyard once was, cos’
those promises were emptied and it’s glass had long been cracked,
filled instead with a bleeding baseless belief that he has a right to a sovereignty
bestowed unto him by the universe’s deities
that whatever he desired was to be,
but was this truly strong?
he says its his right, right?
and besides, when has man ever been wrong

Part 2
there are stories of a man whose body hums blue when the moon comes out
tall like a monolith of pure obsidian that will never crumble nor tear
no he never fears,
he’s always prepared to face the darkness of the night when the nightmares attack
and like the tide because no matter how much gravity is weighing him down he always rises
back.
but just one day, one day when he sinks too far
those blue hues bruises that never fade
serve as a constant reminder of his own suffering
his pain which he hid away
but the shape of that bullet was the key and those floodgates opened anyway
then in those silent cries no tears will flow
tears that could spring life to new questions like ‘are you okay?’, ‘how was ur day?’ or ‘do
you sleep well at night?’
which he refuses to remain the man he was destined to be
bestowed unto him by the universe’s deities
and finally when those waves decide to claim him
he’ll be surprised to find himself drowning

a man believes it’s his right to decide who you should be
what you should wear
or whether or not you must bear witness as he takes what’s most sacred to you,
trampling the flowers in the garden you’ve spent your afternoons nurturing

so I find it rather ironic that as a man must rule with an iron fist another must keep his
emotions locked in an iron cage all
bar from rage.
yet both are still trapped, under the guise of ‘real masculinity’
and both play a part in this cycle of hate

I am Great Britain

Amelie Edmondson

I am Great Britain.
my empire was 'great'.
I am great.
Not for the reasons I believe.
I am the smell of salt and vinegar at the chippy,
I am the corner shop on your way to school,
I am curry in a paper box,
I am the Chinese place down the road,
I am beans on toast on a rainy day,
I am the cans in a bag your mate got from the off,
I am the afternoon tea with cream first, not jam.
I am the parachute in year six PE,
I am chips in a takeaway bag in the canteen,
I am blowing your money on Centerparks,
I am riding you bike to school in the rain,
I am watching The Snowman on Christmas Eve,
I am comparing the weight of your bag with your mate.
I am rain.
Your country's treasures lie in my museums,
And you won't get them back.
I am why your money has my monarch's face on it,
I am why your country speaks English,
I am why you have independence days.
Some miss my empire.
Some are proud to be my people.
Some are not proud.
Some do not wish to be my people.
Some say I am colonialist,
sexist,
racist,
homophobic,
transphobic,
oligarchal,
Stuck up Tory tyrants.
Margaret Thatcher?
Ding Dong the witch is dead!
Playboy, man child, stupid eejit,
Boris.
My parliament comes fresh from Eton,
only the highest quality pricks for politics.
Some are ashamed to call themselves my people.

I am black
white
asian
arab
conservative
liberal
royalist
anarchist

straight
gay
transgender
posh
chavvy
northern
southern
midland
english
scottish
welsh
northern irish
caribbean
indian
pakistani
african
christian
muslim
jewish
hindu
sikhi
buddhist
pagan
athiest
old
young
tired
new
stuck in my ways
progressive
capitalist
socialist
bright
rainy
dark
happy
sad
excited
cynical
I am Great Britain.

Small Things

Ahon Ganguly

Sometimes, we see amazing things.
A sunset view from the breezy shore.
Moonlight reflecting off a shimmering lake.
These are all beautiful things, but now, take a breath, and look around you...
Maybe put your eyes on something you have never really bothered to look at.
The little things of life.

There are so many things around us to look at, to explore.
So many questions to ask about the world.
How, when, why?

As I am writing this, I look at my hand, and then my fingers.
The fingerprint: an endless maze of small intricate designs.
Unique for everyone.
Look at a leaf, gaze at its tiny patterns,
A path for microscopic creatures!
Small wonders are everywhere
All you have to do is look...

Little gestures: a merry smile by a stranger to brighten up your day.
Asking 'how are you?' to a familiar face.
Every emotion you show, or every word you say,
Small changes you make,
Changes people's perceptions of you.
So in short, these tiny things that you do, build up you.

Little things make big things happen.
Think about it, a field needs millions of shards of grass.
And how tiny water droplets make an ocean.

Everything that you have today.
It was all created by a person, with a small idea...
Ready to serve a huge purpose.
So don't define anything as small by looking at its size, volume, or shape!
Judge it by its impact.
Because only one match is needed to make an explosion.
Everything, no matter the size, was created to serve a purpose in this world.
Even a universe needs one atom to start growing.

No Man's Land

Ada Whitfield

My fallen friend lay lifeless at my feet, glassy eyes no longer seeing. No, he couldn't be dead, he just couldn't. We'd been through so much together, it wasn't fair. Our master had retreated to his part of the trench, but I wouldn't move. I nickered gently, as if to wake him, but it was clear he could never reply. There were men shouting, and a faint rumbling, but I did not understand. After what felt like hours, when it could only have been minutes, I turned away my gaze. The faint rumbling was now a deafening roar, and a massive, army-green something rushed towards me.

I ran.

Heart pounding, I thundered through the trenches, too frantic to consider what I was doing. I knocked over an oil lamp, and felt the searing heat only an open flame could bring behind me. Men gazed upon me, stunned and surprised to see me, a trained cavalry horse, acting as wild and skittish as a colt. I interrupted a game of cards as I dashed, confused and afraid, onto the barren expanse where no horse should ever go. The barren expanse of No Man's Land.

Bombs raged mercilessly on the ground and their shrieking whistles of torment rang in my ears, but there was no stopping me now. I crashed through debris, twisting my ankle in a shell hole and not even caring. It was dark, so dark that I didn't see the wire. A piece of barbed wire was strewn across the earth, no doubt from the enemy defences. I rushed into it but felt no pain as it dug into my flesh – my adrenaline was too great.

However, my pain would come. Moments later, a more intact wall of wire, such painful wire, blocked my path, and this time the wire would not stand down. I fell, slipping on mud that I hadn't noticed before, feeling the full extent of my pain. Exhausted, I gave up hope and closed my eyes in despair.

Bunny, Bunny You Are Cute

Rosalie W

Bunny, bunny how cute are you?
Soft caramel eyes,
Floppy silky ears.
Bunny, bunny how cute are you?
Fluffy tan fur,
White pom, pom tail.
Bunny, bunny how cute are you?
Loving personality,
Cute little paws.
Bunny, bunny how cute are you?
A twitching nose,
Munching carrot.
Bunny, bunny how cute are you?
A big heart,
Gently nibbling my fingers.
Bunny, bunny you are cute!

The Image She Took

Ishani Patel

Summer awakened her camera,
It moved in a constant spiral,
And then it found a face.
A face so beautiful.
That even her beauty could not be realised,
Through her camera's eyes.

And in the image she took,
A flash so fleeting,
Birthed a spark in their hearts.
Something was left unsaid,
But they both knew everything the other was thinking about.
The camera: time's thief,
Capturing their stolen moments on the street.
Cradling their time together in rolls and rolls.

Only for a moment,
Were they able to love,
And be loved by the camera.
Their world is ablaze.
And she could not find her eyes through the smoke and flames.

So darkness found her instead,
One final time.
Undertones of red,
Like the shimmer left behind by the fires,
That licked the walls surrounding her.

Her vignette wet under the deep scarlet glow,
Drowning under the water.
She doused the fire,
That familiar spark of passion,
The fire that ignited in their hearts,
And among the streets they once walked.
She drowned it all.

She hoped her image bathed in the water,
Would somehow engulf the flames.
She hung her up.
Muse, shivering in her darkroom.

Oh mind of hers, calling to memories,
Of fingers quietly intertwined,
That exciting rush of adrenaline,
Its fervour taken by a fickle fiend,
A passion left weeping in fire's warm embrace.

Their spark but a hush in the winding colours of her image,
Her lips a curve of unsaid words.
Her spark,
A ghost found in the space between breaths.
Her beauty aglow,
Hopeful light captured by her camera.
Forever held within her eyes.
Still, alive.
Still alive.

Alive in the image she took.

Reflections in Our Time

Simran Kaur

What reflects so well in time?
What power and conflict ever repeats?
Ever comes, ever ebbs, where war did dine,
Where human nature ever beats.

What are these reflections in our time?
In our power and our height,
In the way we hear the chime
Of power and war-like bites.

What happened to the voices that whisper in our ear?
They amplify and tell
Their story through a viral way so we can hear
Where power to them fell.

What rule of nations rule us all?
What power do nations hold in world whole?
Where restlessness will to us fall,
When we leave a damp cold hole.

Nations rule with fearful power,
Nations now do not reflect but move and slither
In dangerous ways, in dangerous hands they tower,
With ways to destroy nations, to make them wither.

Like ink in sodden pages,
Trailing their long vines,
They sneak through all the ages
Of smiles, frowns and pines.

Like black ink that smeared reflections in our thought;
Do we bring cycles once again?
Blackened, curling where we fought
Our wars of blackened pain.

We build a home of heart,
And yet water it with tears,
And there it grows a part,
A twisted toil trimmed with broken shears.

What has man done to thyself?
What has law done for man?
In systems that fold through time and age and health,
What flames did we fan?

We seem a creature of impressions and comprehensions,
Yet it turns to reflections once again,
It turns to time, the time of hesitations,
The time of a blackened pen.

Learn do we, or be it in our nature?
Knit our groups, so be it our way!
What we did, what we try to nurture,

We make it cry with our play!

'Man be an ironic and foolish creature.'
'Man be a benefit to nations and land.'
'Man be a heart that builds life in their feature.'
'Man be a mix of trails on a hand.'

We make our systems, make our play,
Make our ripples in the land,
We sink a blackened ink in day,
We walk an aged hand.

A Determined Dreamer

Liliwen Joy

Charles Darwin was born in 1809,
at The Mount in Shrewsbury Town;
an independent and curious boy,
who preferred worms on the piano as a toy,
as school made him frustrated and frown.

His teachers said he was lazy,
they said he had no concentration at all;
but his ability to procrastinate,
made his teachers rather irate,
as he daydreamed about beetles on the school wall.

His father wanted him to be a Doctor,
so did his mother as well;
but when dealing with blood,
Darwin thought "I'm better with mud!",
and he left to find his next shell.

He travelled the globe on HMS Beagle,
to the Galapagos known most famously;
Darwin observed and reflected,
finding specimens that he collected,
studying finches beaks meticulously.

From his studies and his findings,
he formed the Theory of Evolution;
others thought life was created by our Lord,
a theory Darwin found to be flawed,
which started a science revolution.

In 1859 he wrote the Origin of Species,
brave to publish such controversial themes;
ultimately he was a devoted family man,
with Polly his dog included in his determined plan;
Darwin shows us to always follow our dreams.

Pocket Lint

Sophie Nock

The relics of life accumulate like pocket lint:
piled letters on a hall table, coins in foreign currencies,
tangled keys for a hundred drawers.
Old theatre tickets lying faded in empty purses,
and receipts from first-date meals, pressed into albums.
Spare buttons for a wardrobe full of dresses;
pencils scattered on an unmanned desk.

Inscribed books are the worst:
"Sent in the hope that from it
you may derive unbounded pleasure" –
these are all the remaining words
of a person we may never know.

The dust and scraps of a life well-lived
are valuable yet worthless:
Precious to one person, after death
they are packed into boxes or crumpled in bins.

Then, they were everything, these relics.
Now, they mean nothing.

Paper Towns

Ruby

The map is fading, edges torn,
From places we once called our own.
Names that whispered in the breeze,
Now ghostly echoes, soft as leaves.

We built our worlds on paper towns,
Where dreams were painted, gold and round.
But seasons change and people shift,
And hearts, like pages, start to drift.

I search for faces, but they're blurred—
Just silhouettes without a word.
The roads we walked have cracked and worn,
And friendships, like the rain, are gone.

Once we were fire, burning bright,
Now we're just sparks that fade to night.
I trace the stars, but none align—
The constellations left behind.

The world is fragile, light as air,
A fleeting moment, unaware.
We try to hold, but slip and fall—
Paper towns, we lose them all.



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