



THE
FIRST
STORY
RESIDENTIAL
ANTHOLOGY
2015

FIRST STORY

First Story aims to celebrate and foster creativity, literacy and confidence in young people. We're cheerleaders for books, stories, reading and writing. We've seen how creative writing can build students' self-esteem and aspirations.

We place acclaimed authors as writers-in-residence in state schools across the country. Each author leads weekly after-school workshops for up to twenty-one students. We publish the students' work in anthologies and arrange public readings and book launches at which the students can read aloud to friends, families and teachers.

For more information and details of how to support First Story, see www.firststory.org.uk or contact us at info@firststory.org.uk.

First Story Residential Anthology

An Anthology

BY THE FIRST STORY STUDENTS
AT THE FIRST STORY SUMMER RESIDENTIAL

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FIRST STORY
Creativity Literacy Confidence



As Patron of First Story I am delighted that it continues to foster and inspire the creativity and talent of young people in challenging secondary schools.

I firmly believe that nurturing a passion for reading and writing is vital to the health of our country. I am therefore greatly encouraged to know that young people in this school – and across the country – have been meeting each week throughout the year in order to write together.

I send my warmest congratulations to everybody who is published in this anthology.

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

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Purple Group

Alicia Hinds-Walker

ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Used and Abused: a Pen's Story

I'm a powerful creation,
I can write the beginnings and end of a life
I can give a superhero powers and a tree leaves,
I'm as powerful as you can see

I hate that I'm used for everything other than what I'm
supposed to be
A back scratcher
A tasty snack and worst of all
Using my lid to clean out your waxy sticky ears
I'm so powerful but I'm used and abused
By those who do not love me as well as I do

Red, green, yellow or any colour you want
Different sizes were harmless
Just love me like we love you

Amy Edwards

BARNWOOD PARK ARTS COLLEGE

Erasing Him

My biro skates over my completed black ink portrait
Based on the picture I painted for the policemen
That fateful May evening,
His face is littered with painstakingly etched black lines.
Harsh, cold grey eyes stare at me from the page,
Painted black teeth, tombstones in a smirking mouth
Mocking me with every glance I dare give him,
His nose is made up of tar coloured lines,
I want to erase this monster, the boy who haunts my nightmares.

The pen draws the ink backwards; slowly unravels the many
lines I made
Tracing his cold, cruel face, like a caress,
This pen draws the life from his malignant eyes,
Sending shivers down my spine as I watch his gaze leave me,
I breathe a sigh of relief. His eyes do not burn me anymore.

His mouth, a cruel, black-lined smirk,
I tremble as I remember the word he told me – 'strip'
I now wipe away black lines,
The pen taking the many lines forming his mouth away from
my gaze
His black smirk vanishing, the ink flows back into my pen.

Now I turn to his hair, a black mass of darkness,
 I slowly drag my narrow pen along each short stroke,
 And watch him vanish before me.
 The pen guzzles the cross hatches forming shadows
 Under his missing eyes,
 I take away the crookedness of his nose.
 All I see now are the outlines making up a face
 That doesn't scare me anymore.

I see a few black lines that, by some form of
 Odd magnetic gravity, are eaten up by my pen
 Lifted back into my pen,
 He is disappearing into my pen.
 My memories of him no longer hurt me.
 I need not be scared. He is no longer here.
 With the power of my pen I have destroyed him.
 I now stare at a blank white page.
 I am free.

I take the pen, full of malignant memories,
 The evil essence of him, full of him,
 The ink of the pen is a black hole,
 Drawing me in, but even looking at it hurts.
 I encase the evil in a pen lid. Take the pen,
 Move myself to the open glass case window.
 I hesitate.

The pen does not fall backwards into the garden below.
 It falls to my desk. I am dragged backwards.
 Tugged as though a crane is pulling my limbs;
 The pen is drawn to its final resting place.
 A wooden tombstone of a pen holder
 For the memory of a boy I no longer think about.

Cures

In a world where doctors don't exist,
 The following are cures I'd suggest,
 These are cures you would get from me
 For my cures are somewhat eccentric.

For pain: chew on a mint leaf. The pungent taste will distract
 you.
 For sleeplessness: eat lavender leaves or make a tea infused with
 the scent.
 Imbue with jasmine, if available, for taste.
 For infection: salt water and dock leaves bound with dew
 coated cobwebs,
 Bind the bloody wound, changing every few hours for hygiene.

For nausea: ginger and cloves. For poison: eat yarrow and grass
 until
 You throw up the badness.
 For a lack of iron: chew the cooked bark of a hazel tree and
 drink a tea
 Of honey and mouse blood – two tablespoons

For a cold: nettle soup and lemon tea.
 For a broken leg: bind in reeds stuck together with honey
 Cobwebs and sun-dried mud to ward off infection and smell,
 Add rose-oil as well.
 For a sting: coat in vinegar and salt, drink chamomile tea.

For boredom, pull seeds off grass heads and blow them into the
 eyes of your enemies.

For apathy, listen to wolves howling at the moon, run in the
 wind, scream at the top of your lungs until you feel *something*.
 For heartbreak, watch the glory of a sunrise; hear birds in the
 morning, chirping,
 And play tag with dragonflies at midday.

Memories

Do you remember games we used to play –
 Before growing up took it all away?

Adventure games, hide and seek – don't look, you cheat!
 Before we grew up, remember the fun we had?
 Please tell me you remember me.
 Our memories, I beg of you.

Older, bolder, colder, you won't stay young forever
 But do you remember the games we played together,
 Before we grew up? Remember tea parties – imaginary friends?
 Cuddling up with our favourite tales at the very end
 Of the day, please remember the way we played.
 I can't bear to lose the friendship we had.

Listen to me. Listen to me. Listen to me.
 Don't walk away from our memories
 Remember our games, our dares, our fears, our dreams,
 Recall the monsters from the wardrobe, the books we used to
 read.

You are not listening and I need you to see, you cannot erase
 our memories.
 You cannot turn your back on our history. Do not try and
 forget me.

I am gone but do not suppress me, do not forget me.
 I will be remembered.

Ben Drain

FOREST GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Why Am I Being Forced to Stand Up Here

You told us this was a retreat
Time for us to relax
Not to get us together
And go walking along tracks

The reason we came here was to write
In the world we have a choice
I came to put pen to paper
Not improve my reading voice

You told us there was no WiFi
And that is a very big issue
We know you lied to us
Now we all need a tissue

The lunches we ate every day
Were a right old state
And WE had to make them
But they tasted out of date

Coming to our dinners
At least they're a treat
All good except for Friday
I'd rather have eaten wheat.

With chemical-tasting oven chips
And skinny scaly fish
I thought it was rank
Better food would be my wish.

I have been forced this week
To express myself through words
So I made this poem a rant
To show that no WiFi is absurd.

Destinie Girigari

ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Save Me

My mom did not believe in doctors, instead she believed in doctors. Instead she believed in curing invisible incidents like splinters. She called them tiny terrors, that always would be there when the foot touched the cold wooden floor, and instantly became enemies.

I'm sure it was an accident but the wooden floor betrayed my foot and gave me the gift of a splinter. Next, I'd feel pain and misery whenever I would try and walk but the malicious monster would dig deeper and create a home.

I knew if I went to my dad he'd moan and stare at me in annoyance, giving me the speech of 'why wearing shoes in the house is appropriate and safe.' So I had the courage to go to my mom knowing she would pull out the big guns.

By the big guns, I mean a needle. With that needle, I know it was time to go through the vicious, life-threatening, and upsetting hour of my life.

Together

I picked up my heavy armour, placing it onto my fragile back. Love I called it. It helped me when the ricocheting killer was thrown at us.

Opening my eyes once more after the fire had destroyed what was left. I turned over, holding the cold comforting rifle, that's when I saw them. Dead.

My best friend, the blood slowly gushing from his porcelain head. It was our aim to be the heroes in the world, fight for what we believe could make the world a better place.

But the enemies had stolen him from me. Where is the dignity in dying for one's country? Where is the gratitude and honour in fighting?

I'd always look to the sun to send me hope and more love; it never came today except pouring rain sweeping the blood away.

Take the Stage

The ballerina tightly draws the two velvet strings of her leotard together creating the perfect bow.

The ballerina stares at herself in the mirror, eyeing her flaws and scars, she hates what she sees and sighs in disgust.

The ballerina takes the stage. The judges smile as she arrives.

The ballerina places her foot on the beige wooden pole, balancing as if her life depended on it.

The ballerina twirls and jumps off landing on her two aching feet.

The ballerina flies up into the air as a bird flying peacefully in the sky.

The ballerina ends with a perfect pli  , the judges stare at her with a twinkle in their eyes.

The ballerina fixes her perfect tiara, or what she calls the crown of thorns, which her parents had rewarded her in return for her obedience.

The ballerina's heart beats, as her breathing skips a pace as the judges give her another routine to capture their souls – even more.

The ballerina gracefully smiles, climbing back onto the pole – once again, she does a trick that she's never done before.

The ballerina lands on her two feet, strong and bold. The judges give her a standing ovation.

The ballerina falls to the ground in defeat, her heart slowly stops beating.

If she could grasp an inch of perfection, over pain, she would.

Harry Sporton

NOTTINGHAM ACADEMY, GREEN WOOD ROAD

A Losing Battle

Win or lose; what will it matter? All I care about is my family.

The low rumbling of the approaching army becomes gradually louder. The trumpets sound, the fighting begins.

Fathers, sons and grandsons charge towards their unfortunate demise. An old frail man crawls frantically backwards on his trembling hands and feet, before being sliced chest to stomach with a blunt dagger – spraying blood on his wrinkled face. I try to push such vivid images out of my mind and focus on my beloved wife and children.

I trudge across the muddy battlefield, away from the fighting for a chance of survival. I hide behind a drooping oak tree, until victory is finally declared. I lift myself off the ground, only to be knocked unconscious by a swift blow to the head.

I wake clutching my bruised forehead in unbearable agony. When I sit up, I realise I'm in a wooden train carriage. Through the window, I see the station of my village. The train begins to move slowly along the track. I see my family once again, after three long and painful months. I need to get off this train. My hand clasps the door's silver handle and I pull with all my strength. It swings open with a rush of cold air. I concentrate on the faces of my wife and two children as the station disappears in dense fog. The towering trees outside shake in the relentless weather. The thought of reaching my destination sends a chill down my spine.

I leap from the train, desperate to see my family again. My wishes are eradicated as my skull collides with a sharp, jagged rock. A single tear rolls down my pale cheek. I reluctantly embrace death, longing to see my children again.

Kelell Davison-Thomas

SKINNERS' ACADEMY

The Happy Dance

The man with chains comes every night.
He climbs out the wardrobe and slowly dances.
He smiles as he moves,
Chains making a rhythm,
Tears making a scene.

Each night he offers me chains,
Invites me to join,
Invites me to dance,
Each night I decline.

He'd tell me they're light,
Like folded paper,
Lips curled up tight,
Eyes moist from laughter.

Every night he comes with friends,
Wordless dancing with twisting chains,
They coil to make patterns,
Leaving a space for me,
Every time they plea,
Every time I decline.

Always they climb out of the window,
 Filling streets with sorry sounds,
 They parade around my house;
 Always they circle,
 Always I decline.

Tonight the chained people came,
 The chained men,
 With bound women,
 And shackled children,
 Tonight they all hugged me,
 Tonight I didn't decline.

Sibelius – Symphony No. 2 (in D major)

I open my eyes to the swarm,
 Grey flies, without wings, without eyes,
 They cover the ground without fault,
 A blanket refusing to be moved.
 A dull union, tiptoeing to plucked strings,
 Smothering the foreign land.

The ground breaks to the sound of horns
 Spitting spastic shapes of writhing ink;
 The call of the beast brings along drums.
 They splutter like crude oil from the earthen depths,
 Leaking torment, conductors of destruction.

Advancing, unpredictable, but with direction,
 Each movement highlighted with sound.
 Clouds scatter at the hum of strings,
 A pale spear of birds descends;
 Piercing the drums.

The swarm whispers at the edges,
 Their reach laying siege on the fallen.
 A colourless tide reclaiming the land;
 The blanket bringing sleep.

Eruption!
 A crimson fount of ill intent;
 All-consuming strings and drums, growing louder
 until swallowed by the shapeless silence –
 Marching, with crystal wings and crimson eyes.

Nafhat Sharif

FOREST GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Lasting Memories

The tap swallows the crystal clear water as stains – paint stains – begin to form on the artist’s hands. She carefully picks up a clean paintbrush and watches thoughtfully as her pale hands bring life and colour to its soft bristles.

Walking backwards towards the canvas, the formerly relieved expression chiselled into her features now contorts into a frustrated and almost pained look.

Anyone can see that her work is utterly outstanding, but she doesn’t believe that. With every deep inhale of carbon dioxide and every bit of nail that returns back to her finger, her curly hair becomes less and less frazzled.

The brush between her fingertips glides across the rough canvas, gulps the red, blues, purples and browns into the tip of the instrument of creativity.

The painting disappears gradually, slow like the unravelling of a ball of yarn or piece of ribbon. As the work of art fades so did the slivers of excitement hidden in her irises.

Finally, all that is left is a blank canvas and a buzzing imagination drowning in inspiration and flashing images of her lasting memories.

A Pair of Wellingtons

You’d think that right boot and I would be identical but we’re not. I’m black with white stripes and she’s white with black stripes. Everybody seems to favour her more. They all put their foot in her first *then* in me. When they do put it in me first, they immediately take it back out with a look of discomfort etched on to their face, as if they had just stepped in water with socks on.

Each time our human, Julie, takes us for walks, I always find myself staring at her whenever we’re side by side. I glare at Righty with utter disdain rather than affection. When I catch glimpses of her, she is constantly emitting an aura that screams: ‘I’m better than you’.

Straight after our birth – or rather our manufacture – we were basically joined at the heel. Young, naïve and oblivious to the harsh reality of favouritism from humans, we weren’t purchased for over a year.

On one faithful afternoon, the heavens brought down Julie, who saved us from the never-ending boredom of lying in a box at the back of a run-down shoe shop. She came in, had a few hushed words with the employee at the front, and after a few moments we were in her arms.

The thing was, Julie picked out Righty first from the box which caused her to believe the lie that she was instantly superior.

Everyday I’m forgotten.
Each day I’m the second choice.
I live in the shadow of my sister.

Naznin Ahad

OAKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Dear Life

Dear life,
 You and I,
 We were meant to fly,
 Across the sky.
 Spread our wings
 Feeling alive.
 Just like birds of love
 Above high

Dear life,
 Oh I wished there was a time
 That I myself realised
 Together we can do lots of things
 Together we can fulfil our desires
 And run an empire

Makes me wanna fly
 Makes me wanna touch the sky,
 I'm about to cry
 Feeling alive
 Reunite
 Run an empire
 Together
 Forever
 You can be my lover

Dear life,
 I wish some people had more time
 To discover what you're really like
 To see what's out there
 Explore and marvel a
 Variety of things

Dear life,
 You were my love
 You were all that I could think about
 I couldn't live without you
 You gave me all the things that I needed

Dear life,
 Please I'm about to cry,
 I'm so sorry,
 I wish we could reunite,
 Together
 I could've been your lover
 And you could be my forever

Makes me wanna fly
 Makes me wanna touch the sky,
 I'm about to cry
 Feeling alive
 Reunite
 Run an empire
 Together
 Forever
 You can be my lover

The Sun

My mate was complaining about the weather. I was just ignoring her but she just said the same thing over, over and over again until she was screaming screeching and started to do my little ear in so I told her:

'The sun gets what he wants
 Since the sun is the god of the world
 Cuz it's the biggest star we all see
 If you dare stare at him
 You will never be able to see again
 It shines bright like a diamond
 Well probably too much at some places sometimes
 Like when it starts to melt and burn bodies
 Falling like slime to the ground
 deep down
 not my fault you harassed him
 in the winter with all of your so-called "prayers"

Then she shut her mouth
 And I finally got some peace and sleep.

The Toilet Incident that Happened on Thanksgiving

On a cold November's day, it is Thanksgiving. We all go out for meat; delicious roast chicken. We go out to a friend's for dinner. The dinner she cooked was oh so utterly disgusting; did she even cook the chicken properly?

Slowly each one of us went into the toilet to chuck our chicken down and flush it away.

One of them was a bit brutal/violent with the chicken breast by stepping and jumping on it so that it would fit through the toilet water.

When she asked how the food was, we all stutter. To cover it up we all talk about how good it tasted; you know, the usual. What? I don't want to be rude.

Then the fat guy used the bathroom, he flushed it a few minutes later... The water literally exploded like the fountain at Trafalgar Square. She clocked on. We all confessed that it was us who clogged the toilet and started complaining how nauseating the food was.

Then she received a text message. To say that he was not coming. Her Thanksgiving was truly a disaster.

Reya Akter

OAKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Falling Me

My mahogany skin,
 Growing almighty, powerful,
 Running out of time
 Still standing tall
 Breathless, restless,
 Wind whistling in the morning sky
 Yet darkness
 Singing bluebirds
 Performing
 Crouched at my shoulder
 So clueless.
 For what is yet to come
 Leaves me lifeless
 Pulling through,
 Despite knowing no happiness
 Unclenching the Earth's soils
 Roots lift with my soul
 And my mind invades with fear.
 Tragedy needs new hope
 Falling leaves, lives
 Falling homes, falling me
 Falling me, fallen.

Unfight

Unconscious.
 As if the world has suddenly descended,
 Collapsed.
 Collapsed into a deep coma forever
 And I am sinking into the depths of the Earth.
 I am defeated,
 Paralysed.
 Alone with shattered bones,
 Shattered heart.
 Pulling soul into me.
 Ironing every crease of me.
 Undead.
 Hunchback.
 Now straight up.
 Raising bruises
 And healing a heart.
 My steel sharp-edged wand
 Repelling away from him.
 He roars at me.
 Eyes dehydrated
 Swallowing tears
 Swallowing pain and regrets.
 We both walk away
 Strangers.

Old Moon

I was extremely patient, waiting,
 Endless hours for the sun to set
 But that would have to cause a miracle
 So envious
 No one to admire her
 Not the same way they did moon
 And the others stars.

'Asleep already?'
 A loud voice echoed.
 'I just got here
 And have bored a nation.
 What is so daunting?
 I have feelings but
 All I have is people walk all over me, literally.

The sun you see...
 Or don't see
 Shows off her vibrant glowing skin,
 So...'

'You should hear what she has to say
 About you!' I replied with a smile.

Sabah Hussein

SKINNERS' ACADEMY

Aqsal al Awal (أقوال تصقلا)

Our minds are fizzy,
 dwindling, turning
 Writers feeding us lines
 like
 sunlight to plant
 shoots
 Our pens, a conversation on paper
 Feet, a conversation with carpet

It is six a.m. and I am
 walking. Guilt etched on to my
 skin because my 5:05 alarm
 woke up my roommate, and

I pass staff, chirping
 'morning' as she pushes her
 food-filled trolley, her
 white hair escaping from
 her netted cap it is dancing
 to a different tune, a
 reckless serenade
 from the last time
 I saw her, I am

Out and a little bunny
and her children are
scurrying, they stop
perched, looking
around to see if
I'm a threat and I
stamp anyway, not because
I'm a threat, but because I
could be. Finally,

I am here sitting, a circle
of leaves surround me and
though my head is still
buzzing, unorganised
with experiments from
both science and literature,
I take a deep breath. And

breathe, away from
the cigarette skylines, deep
from my hips like
my mama said

Then, I realise:
I owe this to
Aqsal al Awal, teaching me
grammar and comma
placements, showing me
that sometimes
(just sometimes)

Colours described as
cars are better than
cars described through
colours, now

The trees around me
become wooden
tables, my
thoughts become the
future, and I am
thrown three years back

To the beginning of
this story, the first
time I sat there between
two friends, cakes
litter the tables and
I know I wasn't there
because of
'Gifted and Talented'
but I
don't care, lines

Coming from
Courtia Newland
sow themselves onto
our desks, encouragements
plastered on the walls
reminding me of homes and
fridges, now

I am standing in the circled
grass area and I
have so much to
say, so much to
be grateful for so

Thank you.

Tales

They said that the bites of bedbugs can cure tick bites;
a little alike to small pox and cow pox.
They said that the smell of pine would rid you of hiccups,
but only if you inhaled it with mouths ajar,
pressed against the tree.

They said that a walk backwards at twilight
through any sort of rural path
would bring ten restful nights,
but you could bring twenty if you stepped forwards once.
They said that submerging your hand
in hay could cure a headache.

They said that if a leaf
from a sycamore tree was
tickled at the back of your knee
that you could restart a heart –
If only I knew.

Opia

[Author's note: Opia is the word that describes the ambiguous intensity of looking someone in the eye which can feel simultaneously invasive and vulnerable.]

'how does it feel to be so far
from us,' I ask Centuri
she says 'it is cold, but no
matter. I am fond of my
own company

you see, my brother,
(your sun) ran away
from home and after that
my family grieved.'

i gulped and felt
compassion
for Centuri, I don't think
that she is angry
or hurt,
for her tone was far too light.

'then where are your family,'
Centuri took a deep breath: 'they
ran away too,
reaching distant corners of the
galaxy, stretching
cut far and wide. They
created their own families,
who stretched even wider.'

we fell silent and Centuri's
smile became down-turned.

Shannon McNulty

THE BRIDGE AP ACADEMY

Writing to Music

A rumble and a grumble
 A crackle and it strikes
 It cuts a man down
 Like a child on a bike
 Slaughter, butcher and tear things down
 You cannot hide from it now
 It will be heard
 It will be seen
 The bloodshed, the horror, you hear the screams
 The children will die
 The innocent will burn
 This is our mother taking back her earth
 The storm will die last
 And what will be left
 Is our mother with an empty chest.

Talking to the Moon

Me: 'Hey moon way up there, I demand you listen to my despair!'

Moon: He turns and he glares. 'I'm always here, what is it you'd like me to hear?'

Me: I take a deep breath and I begin to scream. 'I look up at the sky day and night and I see you right there in my sight. Why is it you can appear in the day yet at night the sun has to go away?'

Moon: He laughs then he sneers. 'The sun is just lazy and it drives me crazy. The sky can't be empty! It's the way it's meant to be.'

Me: I don't believe him so I walk away and wait for the sun to return in the day, I'll ask her then why she's never there. I then curl up in bed and stroke my cat's hair.

Inanimate Object

I've got a pair of eyes constantly burning into my back
 The only time he puts me down is when he goes for a nap.
 I help him see better than he ever could before
 But that doesn't stop him from dropping me to the floor.
 He wipes my eyes if they get damp or dirty
 And he'd never ever let anyone hurt me.
 It may sound like he cares
 But he keeps an extra pair
 On his desk, beside his leather chair.
 I look to where she sits
 In her soft leather case
 Oh I envy her classy taste
 She's never been touched
 She's never been worn
 Her silk little cloth hasn't been torn.
 I'm becoming weak
 And I fall off in the heat
 I don't think I'll last till the end of the week.
 He won't try to fix me
 He won't get me help
 He'll just go to her
 And my heart will melt.

Sharmin Akthar

OAKLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Cure to a Broken Heart

The cure to a broken heart is
 the dance of unfurling leaves as they ride the wind,
 the scent
 of damp grass from early morning dew
 and the soft sigh of rose
 petals as they reach their summer bloom.

The cure to a broken heart is
 the coarse touch of tree
 bark along your fingertips
 and the rhythmic rippling
 of pond water,
 moist against your skin

The cure to a broken heart lies in
 the valley of your tongue
 as you taste runaway grains of pollen leaving home
 for the first time.

War-Torn

He lay there buried
 with milk teeth not yet fully grown
 as ash turns to fire
 and bathes his marbled body.
 Blood pours into his
 fingertips,
 his mouth, his nose to
 pound his lungs and
 restore his heart with life once more.
 The dirt knits his skin
 back together
 and his clothes,
 stolen by the wind,
 cling to him in desperation.
 Shrapnel pulls his bones into
 his matchstick legs
 as the sky swallows the
 dancing scrap metal into its vast belly.
 The boy stands now,
 his tears rolled back into his eyes,
 red-cheeked and smiling
 as he points to his mother,
 the mechanical grey bird he can see
 tearing down the world with its wings.

A-Not-So-Celebratory Celebrations Box

I am barely placed on the table, before a stampede erupts from one corner of the room. All at once, hands cram into me, pulling and twisting my insides. I am turned on my side, shuffled, re-shuffled, choked, and squeezed until the breath leaks out of me. Sticky chocolate-smearred fingers discolour my factory fresh décor, leaving their torn leftovers behind. A wrapper here, a half-bitten Mars bar over there, as if they were dissatisfied with my service.

A few seconds only passed and I am panting with exertion. Do these monsters have no compassion? The wild-eyed creatures finally leave, the grubby hands shoving the smirking Malteasers and Galaxies into their bags for later, paying no heed to my broken state.

I find solace with the few abandoned sweets left behind to fight the cold; Mars, Milkyway and Bounty console me through my terror. We are condemned to the windowsill with all the other crushed tins and boxes left to wallow in their misery. And this is when I know.

The Celebrations box that once was will never celebrate again.

‘Who Am I?’

She is a whisper told through time; a catch too great for human hands. She was good once but now she wields her beauty like a whip – deadly, painted in blood, malevolent.

It’s the kind of beauty that starts wars – and fuels them for centuries.

A siren’s song tears through her throat free from its cell but not its prison. Its wings are clipped, feathers hastily plucked and groomed as if to hide the monstrosity, but what is a bird without its wings? Will she ever feel as beautiful as she did when her skin tasted the sky’s sweetness?

She decides she’s lost herself long before now but continues to brush out the barbarity of her crudely cut ensemble. They tell her she has a thousand more costumes to choose from. No one will ever know the difference. Except her. Only her.

No one that matters anyway...

Her eyes scream an eerie calmness that her shaking hands disobey. But it’s okay. She knows this because the women in the mirror told her so. What else could a smile possibly mean?

Is she happy? She looks like she is, from her ironed mane and her diamond encrusted engagement ring to her preened fuchsia fingernails. Oh how bold and daring she must seem.

Is this what happiness looks like?

She can hardly tell anymore but they tell her that it is. So she smiles a bit wider like a good little girl. Only now she’s not so little, a woman almost; but they all tell her how to feel and how to act; she’s not so sure she’s grown from the six-year-old who liked to wear her mother’s sophisticated dresses with her sophisticated pearl necklaces. A little girl playing dress up and nothing more.

Yes, she has hardly grown at all.

Without so much as a crack on her veneer mask she reaches for her six-inch heels. Perhaps this will make her feel bigger than the shrinking mass she is. Maybe this is the final piece of machinery that will fix her.

The doorbell begins to ring in agitation. The girl trapped in a woman’s body is the one who answers the door. Her friends wait there impatiently, their breath visible in the frosted evening air, so she grabs her purse with one last look in the mirror.

‘Who am I today?’ she asks.

Her reflection cocks its head, tuts to herself. She should know by now.

‘You are whoever I tell you to be.’

And today she is a woman newly engaged, confident and more fiercely beautiful than ever before.

If only it were the truth.

The City of Hopes and Miracles

London,
 you raised me
 from New Year's
 in a cascade of fireworks
 and world famous Brick Lane
 bagel shops to
 cinema tickets from Genesis,
 made and remade in a
 span of a lifetime.

You're the city
 that took me back in time
 to the era of heads
 more often separated from shoulders
 than attached
 and kings with large appetites for wives.

You're the city of
 drunken renditions of nursery rhymes bellowed
 through the rain and the
 faint whisper of karaoke night going wrong.

You're the city that
 repaired my mum's overworked heart
 and removed my brother's
 rebelling appendix.
 You're the city my
 grandfather brought his
 family to

in hopes of a miracle,
 and seven children,
 twenty seven grandchildren and
 four great grandchildren later,
 his wishes came true...

Shauna Townsend

BARNWOOD PARKS ARTS COLLEGE

Are You Hopeful or Fearful?

As the bitter iron taste fills your mouth, washed against your brittle teeth; how do you feel, hopeful or fearful?

You've survived this far, so why not be hopeful to survive this entire ordeal?

But you've only survived this long because of their ignorance to your strength of hope. What do you think they'll do when they find out your secret 'superpower'?

You only have to hold on for a little longer and then you've got a chance to be free from this hell. But you have to hold on a little longer.

Don't you dare, don't you dare lose hope. Keep your eye on that golden horizon, focus on that and keep that in your sights.

Another blow, you don't think you can take this anymore but what happened to that hope that shone in your eyes? You're suddenly fearful but that's no surprise.

Trapped in a vicious cycle you can't escape, hopeful then fearful but that's their mistake.

Purple Group Six-Word Autobiographies

Shannon McNulty – 'Pirate Metal & sci-fi all the way'

Nafhat Sharif – 'My writing will leave you breathless'

Reya Akter – 'The adrenaline rushed to my head'

Destinie Girigari – 'Simply Amazing Creative, Simply First Story'

Alicia Hinds-Walker – 'Exhilarating and creative, I feel free'

Amy Edwards – 'I drink far too much coffee'

Naznin Ahad – 'Forget the ones who judge me!'

Harry Sporton – 'Less about me. More about others'

Sharmin Akthar – 'Life is not complete without nutella'

Kelell Davison-Thomas – 'I'm more than just six words'

Shauna Townsend – 'Ink-stained hands are my thing'

Ben Drain – 'I think Doctor Who is amazing!'

Sabah Hussein – 'Motherly boots, grey hoodie, morning rain'

Red Group

Bianca McConnell-Rhone

ST MARTIN-IN THE-FIELDS HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Untitled

Our time on Earth is not known to last an eternity
 You'll knock on all our doors someday,
 Letting yourself in uninvited,
 Unlocking doors with all those keys you hold.

You invite yourself to family outings,
 Carrying your bucket full of destruction
 And a spade to smooth out any stubborn, sharp edges.
 You're having the time of your life
 And before you know it
 Your entire world is in complete darkness.
 You caused all this and then you leave the party early,
 As if nothing ever happened.
 You leave permanent scars.

When you come,
 You perform acts of mass destruction all around.

A pause in reality.

A theft never put before the judge

Caryce Brierley

MATTHEW MOSS HIGH SCHOOL

The Cycle

Like everything else, it started small.
 It was as quiet as a mouse, and as invisible as a ghost.
 But unlike the others, it wanted to be big.
 So it started to climb.

Slowly, it crept for as long as it could.
 It became louder, bigger and began to be noticed.
 The ones who were bigger than it, with more power as well,
 Started to track it, stalk it, and observe it like a spy.

The day finally came for the brave and now big one to challenge
 them.
 But when it came, the tables were turned.
 Soon, it was made small again and started to run. Run. Run.
 The bigger ones were after it, out for its blood.

The now small and terrified one tried to hide, fight and survive.
 Eventually though, it stopped.
 But it wasn't the ones who were bigger that got it.
 It was destroyed by itself, and was left alone to die alone.
 Worthless, and at the bottom.

All the big ones laughed and tossed the small one aside
 Like a piece of rubbish from food that had just been eaten.
 They had won and were on top as the biggest again.

All but one of them that was.
 One of them pitied the small one that had been destroyed.
 So with all the power it had it stood up and began to shout,
 At the other wicked ones.

But they turned on the protestor like wild dogs,
 And soon the protestor was in grave danger.
 They whispered, hinted, backstabbed, argued, punished,
 threatened, abused,
 And eventually killed.

They had killed their whistleblower from within
 As brutally as the small one was destroyed,
 Almost the same way ironically.
 Then they went back to normal as if it hadn't happened.

However, the one that protested had a descendant.
 This descendant was small as well.
 It wanted to be big like the one who was destroyed.
 And the cycle began again.

Ciara Power

FULHAM CROSS GIRLS' SCHOOL

When Death Comes

When death comes,
 Like footsteps up a winding staircase,
 Edging further to the pools of my beating heart,
 Entrapped in a stale cage,
 I will not know.
 I will not know whether he will creep,
 So light and painless,
 That when my eyes shut,
 I will not know that it is forever,
 I will not know.
 I will not know whether he will claw at my skin,
 Like an angry wave,
 The rocks of my eyes being broken and torn.
 Will he make me fight?
 Against my own body?
 Parasites of disease,
 May touch every cell,
 Turning them into bullets.
 When death comes,
 I wish to greet him gladly,
 I wish to shake his hand,
 White bone snakes,
 Caged within my sea of veins.
 I wish that the stairs will lead,

To walls of white,
 But most of all,
 I wish that when death comes,
 Life finishes first.

The sun will rise,
 The sun will fall,
 No matter how many graves stand tall.

The Sound of Fallen Men

It started quiet and slow,
 The sound of fallen men,
 Whispering woe.
 Individual souls seized,
 Writhing parasites attack their feast.
 Like an infestation, it grew,
 All unable to live anew.
 The sound grew darker and deeper,
 Witnesses' horror show keepers.
 The unknown starts to wade in,
 Broken promises of freeing sin.
 A force greater than any other,
 Cry of anger begins to suffer.
 Loud as the beating inside the cage,
 Cage of bones, unforgivable rage.
 There, lays the last of the living,
 Untouched, alone, shivering.
 Silence sweeps across the land,
 Fire burns from a terrifying hand.
 The world ceased to exist,
 Started with anger, tears, a fist.
 Yet a new dawn has broken,
 Men's words left unspoken.

Ikraa Jabeen

FEVERSHAM COLLEGE

When It Comes

Before death comes
 I want to have lived;
 Jump off the highest mountains,
 Fall into the belly of the sea,
 Go to the outback in Australia.
 I want to see foreign lands
 Leading to hopeless mistakes.

When death comes
 I will see him
 On the horizon slowly coming towards me
 Whilst he arrives a slow dreaded whistle will play,
 The birds will slowly be drowned out as the whistle
 draws louder
 I will see him
 He will be a dark mysterious figure floating,
 Like I'm gravity he will be pulled towards me
 I will see him
 And the aroma of the room will turn bitter sweet,
 As I know the time has come.

After death comes
 I might feel,
 Like droplets of ice are freezing me in place

As I descend into a pool of pines
 A sweet smelling scent that will caress me into a
 slow lulling sleep
 I might feel,
 A shiver as I see the mysterious figure floats back,
 Bobbing in the horizon
 I might feel,
 Peaceful as my eyes are sealed with wax, shifting me
 into a long slumber.

Imani Henry-Bailey

THE NOTTINGHAM EMMANUEL SCHOOL

Tarnished

I am the school beside the dirty river, its vandalised walls acting as the only barrier from the filth and vermin swimming within its disease-ridden depths. On summer days it glistens; a calling, tranquil... beautiful. A lot of the beauty around me has hidden demons. The seemingly innocent ones that strive to plunge your reputation into the dark grips of self-doubt.

I am tarnished. Up-rooted.

At the end of term – summer – there is a rush; a clash of noise so overwhelming that I myself get lost. Then silence. Alone with the harsh smell of rubbish rising from the water. The withering grasses on my lawns a reminder – I've been abandoned. Again.

What would I do to feel a single piece of the love I see others around me get? They expect me to become a miracle worker. To sprout wings and transform into something else. Something other-worldly. Something worthy.

I can only close my eyes and dream of living up to these expectations.

I close my eyes and I see an image of beauty. A beauty only I can depict; my own form of perfection free from the victimisation of others. And I smile. Noone sees me. Noone can physically perceive the joy I feel encased within the cold layers of my heart, but I am happy. And until the night chill leaves my bones and the heat of the sun pulls me from my haven, I am free.

At last, I am free.

Endings

When you come for me,
With your falsehood of sincerity,
An eternity free from the burden of human mortality,
Just remember: You took me.

And if I come willingly,
Pleading and taking what you force on me,
Don't give me that crap about destiny,
I'm too far gone for that.

But remember me.

Whatever state my human form;
Haggard, depressed, reborn,
Remember my face. And give me respect.
I want to die the same way I lived – no regrets.

And I can't say I'm at that stage right now,
So if you come like a tyrant wanting to plough
The weak and reserved from this very earth:
Wait.

I'm not ready and I probably never will be,
Nor will be the people around me
Be prepared to suffer the burden of loss.
Population control at any cost.

Mutiny against humanity.

Yet, I wouldn't mind dying to save another,
 Though I might resent the act
 That severs my life like the blade of a rusty axe;
 Cruel. Unexpected. Immediate.

But still remember me;
 Don't let my essence slip from the world,
 Like another innocent lost in the hurl,
 That we call life.

Let me be remembered,
 Joyfully.
 And in turn I'll expect you.
 Willingly.

Kyra Waldram

THE NOTTINGHAM EMMANUEL SCHOOL

Generations Apart

'We are born free and equal and should treat others in the same way.'

Fair.

Equal.

Words that apparently mean nothing to authorities as they step
 over the body of another youth dying on the streets.

Words that are posted on every wall, picture
 Promises of a politician mean nothing.

Words.

Words that a teenager trapped in their body, cut, bleeding
 sneers at.

Words that an eight-year-old forced into marriage doesn't
 understand.

Will never understand.

She'll die on the honeymoon.

Ironic how something named so sweet can end so bitter.

Blood in the mouth of the young boy as he spits mercilessly at
 the 'equality' as his peers jeer and chant

Homo

Homo

Homo

Sapiens

Homo

Human
 Homo sapiens.
 Human.
 I've seen my generation attack itself.
 Watched the anonymous coward comment beneath the transition.
 I've seen the before and after shots.
 Comparing the capture of self-hate in 'his' eyes
 That grows out in her breast
 Joy filling, glowing from every crevice
 The transformation of a girl to a goddess.

But also on the girl with the hijab
 The head-dress of a celestial being on earth
 Her choice.
 Yet you still believe you have the right to comment?
 A condescending con
 Descending, stooping to the level reserved solely for you on the
 scale of self-absorbed righteous asses.

Known more commonly as the throne.

You hold onto your opinions like a child with a toy he most
 desperately wants thrusting it obtrusively onto others
 Obsessive and possessive gripping your train of thought
 Neanderthal stumbling over your thick sloping forehead.
 You attach to the only place
 They deem as safe
 And scream your hate behind a glasses-wearing veil.

The boy at which you shoot animated glares
 Virtual sneers and
 Disgusted stares

He's only 13.
 He shouldn't have to live that way.
 But still the voices in his head grow louder demanding attention
 as they tell him he's not worth it, to just give up and end it
 'til he just.
 Can't.
 Take it.

Words scrawled, painted, screamed as another young boy falls,
 shot in the back
 His family in mourning, but
 The authorities?
 Tamper with the evidence.

Explain to me when 'equality' involves people unsafe in their
 own homes because of

Race

Gender

Sexuality

And I will tell you you're wrong.

Wrong

Wrong

Incorrect

Not even close

Words that I refuse to believe until girls can walk the streets at
 night without fearing for their life

Their glances over the shoulder like the beat of a song

But they daren't wear their headphones lest they give the
 advantage to the stranger approaching from behind

By force of habit they back to the far side of the path as a white
 van passes by

Coincidentally it stops

And now her heart is thrumming.
 A man climbs out the van and
 Oh.
 It's a delivery man, humming.
 Okay
 I knew that
 Oh god, keep walking, Kyra, the guy's carrying pizza.

Words.
 It's all words until action is taken and we will be the ones
 armed in the corner of parliament
 Aiming arrows of truth
 Bending their words
 Blocking the lies and
 Protecting my generation from another making our choices
 Deciding our future
 Why? Because you are not me
 My generation
 We need to be free
 Yet you are controlling the nation
 As though you know what we need

Equality does not mean taking the vote to the old and outdated
 Where anyone different is talked at and hated

We are independent and the sooner you realise
 That
 Together we can make the changes, precautions
 Save what you have caused us
 Survive the storms
 Provide and support
 Search and rescue

Erase the mistakes you
 Left us broken and starved

Why did the girl cross the road?
 She was bullied and oppressed
 Depressed and suppressed until the only other way she saw
 was out.

My Generation.
 Will not be its own downfall.
 And neither will yours
 Cause the destruction of a people so promising in their ways
 It is not me.

It's you.

Lily Douglas

WILLOWFIELD HUMANITIES COLLEGE

Masks

As I look out across the swirling sea, my hair whipped about in a world wind dance, I think of all the times I have stood here before and wonder, why? Why here? Why now? What is so important about the sparkling diamonds of the sun as they caress the seabed in a warm unbreakable embrace.

I knew deep down it was because its mystery reminded me of my mother. How she would sprinkle everything with her magic fairy dust and make it all seem normal and beautiful at the same time. But somewhere behind those wide innocent grey eyes, there lay in waiting a darkness which spoke her lies in the same pouty lips.

She was just like the sea I guess, dazzling. Putting on a circus show for everyone to see. To draw you in, before they drag you down into a pit of loneliness.

You can't escape.

Mustafa Jibril

ISLINGTON ARTS AND MEDIA SCHOOL

We Shall Meet Again

When death comes and says hello,
I shall not greet back and be distraught,
I shall die with pride and not be forgotten.

And when I see the world collapse in front of me,
I will remind myself of the great memories,
All my friends and family who meant so much to me,
I will see them when their time is up and free,
We shall meet again just don't forget about me.

When all that is left of me is bones,
And you come to the funeral,
I will be looking at you from above.

Trenches

We gather around the table,
 All laughing and cheerful playing card games,
 Then we think for one moment,
 This is the end, isn't it?

We march along the walls of terror,
 Hoping that we won't suffer,
 But the reality is all that will remain is our souls,
 Gone but not forgotten.

I pick up my weapon,
 Pushed into the open,
 The squelch of when I walk,
 My friend dead lying on a rock,
 This is the end, isn't it?
 Gone but not forgotten.

Olivia Keats

FULHAM CROSS GIRLS' SCHOOL

My Butterflies

Every unshed tear, unspoken thought, enclosed emotion.
 More butterflies open their wings through my legs and arms.
 They stay forever.
 Some on my wrists, some on my hips.
 First they are red then they turn white with age.
 I'm worried they'll whisper my secrets,
 Catch them in the net of my sleeves.
 My butterflies scare me not intrigue me.
 They won't fly away.

Oluwatemidayo Olukoga

ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

I Am the School

Looking from afar at the raging sea of school children. The
 sound of irritating children, deafen me with their screeches.

For all, I am just a building.
 A place used, abused and hated.
 The days and nights.

I am constantly mortified at the aroma of...

As a school, I feel joy when the summer comes.

I am relieved of my duty as a school.

Reminiscing on yesterday, in the morning.

As they touch the walls, I feel the coldness, sending shivers
 down my spine.

A place most are too scared to visit.

At night I dream of meeting my family, back home in Australia.
 Seeing all my cousins.

But what am I? A school left alone.

What an angry man I have turned into.

Mould.

Growing from my ears and eyes.

If I could say one thing to the students and teachers.

I would just say.

Respect me.

As I may only be a building, but still I have feelings.

Listen to me.

Today I watch a new boy,

Who bruised me with his harsh words,

Plastered on my forehead.

I just wish I was at home,

I just wish there was a place for me.

In this World.

The Girl I Once Was

A girl I once was.
Locked away in this shadow prison.

Searching. Nothing. But...

The dark forest, with hidden secrets lurking from every corner
Silence!

The formation of the maze, that sets my path.
Running away, from this never ending nightmare.
An unexpected turn has taken me back to my starting point.
I am out of this maze.
Anger, rage. My life fading
A mere memory.

The stench of anxiousness enveloped me.
They marched to the beat of my terrified heart.
Black
Cracks formed in the sky.
Everything. Disappearing.
Left.
Alone.

Sitting by her death bed.

Death!

Death haunts everyone
He plays with your thoughts and emotions
He is the grim reaper,
He enslaves you.
When death comes knocking on my door, I will not open.
Death is part of a cycle
He claims anyone, He chooses to
He was only 5 when death came. So young.
Death plays games with you.
His favourite game is hide and seek.
Death is a time many dread.
If death comes lurking in the shadows.
I would just...
He disguises himself in an angelic façade
Then he morphs into a black figure,
Who is unrecognisable to most.
Death is a hunter, hunting for its prey.
I am his prey.
Death is a man I never want to meet.

Ray Baker

WILLOWFIELD HUMANITIES COLLEGE

Clock of the Soul

He inserted the key into the back of her head. A mechanical arm crept down from the clinically white ceiling and spun it at an incredible speed for several seconds, before smoothly removing the gold object. A light ticking began like a heartbeat within her. She jerked her arms stiffly to her sides and stood up, unblinking. The man before her smiled. 'Thank you,' he croaked in astonishment. The woman's head slid to her shoulder before jumping back a split second later. Her mouth started to open and close silently like a goldfish, each gape revealing the gold cogs twisting in unison at the back of her throat. The man stepped forward and hugged her.

'I- I- I-' she stammered without any expression.

'I am Lucy,' she finished.

'Yes.' He rubbed her plastic face affectionately. 'Yes you are.'

Slip

You were going to feed the pigeons but the thought slipped
your mind,
You open your crisps with a quick tug of wrinkled hands,
And look out at the park before you,
Peaceful, serene.
Ten people doing Zumba in an oval, the grass waving gently
below,
All in front of the graffiti scars of your bench.
Two children play, chasing each other with sticks.
One dives to the ground,
Loses himself in the undergrowth.
The other boy moulds his hand into a gun,
Laughs as he clenches forefinger and middle finger together.
'Bang!' he yells.
And you're back.
War has come to Tottenham Hale.
Bullets rip sound itself, make it bleed.
You dive behind the trench where they cry into the butts of
their rifles.
GAS! someone shouts,
You the fastest fumbler,
Get the mask on just in time,
To watch your friends' insides turn to red foam,
Each bubble releasing the death cries caught in the spider web
gluing together the sides of their dry throats,
Their hollow black masks melt into the sand.
They rear up over the exploded DNA strands of wire,
Skeletons,
Death gone mad,

You raise your bayonet, it's all you can do...
All you could do to stop –

You look up and see her, handing you your crisp packet,
A sad smile.
You sit gently back down as the Zumba class takes a new position.
The war was over for the world,
But you never could let them win,
You never could quite let it
Slip
Your
Mind.

Ridaa Babar

MATTHEW MOSS HIGH SCHOOL

Hand In Hand

When Death comes, it will be dark and gloomy,
long hands outstretched towards me,
asking me what I've done with my time.
Taunting me.

When He comes, I want to be content,
I want to say to myself,
Yes, I've made it count. I did it.

I want to feel happy with myself,
satisfied,
knowing I tried my best,
never gave up,
used every fibre in my body,
to be sure that nothing was wasted.

When dark and gloom comes, I want to fly,
fly away peacefully, happy.

When He comes, I want love,
love from my family and friends,
so that when I die they are there with me.

When those long hands come, I will seize them.
Hold them, hold them tight.

Life and Death are both amazing,
you can't take one without the other.

Life and Death come hand in hand

The Puppet Show

A slow army.
Every foot creeps forward.
With mournful faces they inch closer.
A brother will be lost. They know.
Faster,
faster,
faster.

One word,
one word leads to a loss of innocent lives,
unlived lives,
incomplete lives.
A loss of lives that aren't lives.
A loss of puppets.

Charging.
They've gone to kill each other.
Racing.
The sounds of metal clashing and groaning.

Their battle has begun,
it isn't over yet,
but mourning,
mourning has already begun.

I Am the School

It's the first day of term and I'm ready.
I'm ready.
I'm ready.
I'm ready.
Ready to see the new uniforms,
the fake grins on the teachers' faces,
pretending they're glad to be back.

I am the school,
the school that sees the smiles,
witnesses the breakdowns,
spots the naughty kid.

I am the one that hears endless sobs,
screeching and laughing,
and the thud from the constant march.

I am the one that smells tasty dinners,
the perfumes, the sick and sweaty teens.

At night I dream,
dream of being a museum,
a place of genuine interest,
a place with different people,
new people,
strange people.
A place full of appreciation.

Life is the longest thing you will ever do.
Don't spend it hating me.

Safeerah Mughal

FEVERSHAM COLLEGE

Existing Again – Response to Sibelious Symphony No. 2

I lean against the crumbling walls of our cottage.
A corner of the roof has collapsed, giving it a lopsided leer
Ivy climbs along the cracks in the walls.
The leaves rustle restlessly, as if they recognize danger
 approaching.
Even the animals quieten – scurrying away into the darkness.
It starts to rain – cold droplets decorate my face –
A glittering mosaic that blurs my vision.

I can taste the saltiness of my tears as I stand frozen
Time has caught up with me –
She is already here.
Her face hidden behind the velvet dark
Dancing around a beam of moonlight.

I welcome the icy depths growing within me
Broken nails like scalpels
Carving crimson half moons
In a mockery of art.

Time wheezes. Grinds to a halt
And I see a single, brilliant sphere

Turning slowly
As if exhibiting all its wonders
Both stunning and sinister.
My lungs forget to draw air
I stare dumbfounded
You? I whisper.
A plea.
A fool's hope.

All these years
I had thought Death had taken her
All these years I was left to navigate the treacherous waters of
 the world alone
All these years she was alive.

My trembling hand reaches out to touch her –
My fingers trace her callous hands
A scar maps constellations across her face
I'm swallowed by her grey eyes that hold flecks of amber –
Ashes that still mourn lost dynasties.

I feel detached from my body.

I am floating.
I don't exist.
She doesn't exist.
Yet she is here...

Waiting for Death

I would sit in my rocking chair
 And watch the sun go down
 Two cups of tea beside me –
 As I waited for Death to visit.
 I imagined his thin frail hand holding mine as he pressed his
 crimson lips to my palm
 Smiling sweetly.
 I dreamed of the worlds that existed in his eyes
 The love and anguish of entire existences
 The nothingness of living.
 The night wind tousled my hair
 And the moon shone brightly on my glowing face
 I sat until the stars whispered goodbye
 But Death never came...

* * *

I would sit in my rocking chair
 And watch the sun go down
 Two cups of tea beside me
 As I waited for Death to visit.
 This time I had brought the gift of memory –
 Wrapped in ribbons of silken tears and laughter...
 I imagined dancing in his arms
 And lying together on the blue waters of this world
 I could feel the winds that battered ships against the waves of
 his breath
 I could taste the salt and sorrow of the Seven Seas.

The night wind tousled my thinning hair and caressed my slowly
 sagging skin
 I sat until the stars whispered goodbye but Death never came

* * *

I would sit in my rocking chair and watch the sun go down
 Two cups of tea beside me
 As I waited for Death to visit.
 My bones ached and my hands shook, as I placed my soul on the
 table for him.
 I gazed wistfully,
 Travelled again through the twisting grooves,
 The gnarled tree roots
 The dried beds of oceans.
 I dreamed of setting sail with Death
 Venturing to forgotten ages
 I dreamed of his cold, warming embrace and stolen whispers in
 my ear.
 The night wind tousled my greying hair and soothed my worn
 grey eyes,
 I sat until the stars sadly whispered goodbye but Death never
 came.

* * *

I sit in my rocking chair watching the sun slowly go
 Down.
 Two steaming cups of tea beside me
 As I wait for Death to visit...
 The gift of memory has faded
 And my soul has withered, dissipated...

I struggle to imagine Death
I wonder how Time has treated him...

Once I would dream of us together
But alas, Time has not treated me well...
I fear the disgust on
Death's face – as the young girl
who once waited for him
has gone.

Tears fall from my eyes –
Ungracefully, jerkily
But then I smell the salt of the Seven Seas...
Time smiles triumphantly
As a cold hand
takes mine,
I gasp –
Crimson lips press to my palm
And I am drowning
In the love and anguish of
Entire existences.

Death smiles up at me.
He caresses the wrinkles on my face,
Traces landmarks
Of grief and love and laughter.

And together we fly.

Sarah Tebbs

CHERRY WILLINGHAM COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Chase

You spend years following.
Small feet pattering behind large leather shoes,
Lips curling, mirroring hers.
You don't notice the time.
You don't notice the increasing pace.

Until suddenly you realise you're chasing,
Trying to capture the lost time,
But you end up wasting more
Desperately chasing hopeless dreams.

The years fly past like bullets
Mercilessly culling all those around you.
You chase their memories but they always slip away.
Misery is deadweight.

One day, it becomes too much,
Your legs give way under you
But you don't hit the ground,
You just keep falling.
Falling...
The chase is over.
You have lost.
But honestly, no one ever wins.

Unnatural

Romeo and Juliet

This is the only form of true love,
 At least that's what we're taught to believe.
 And yet, I just don't feel the same.
 I could blame it on the books,
 Their snide smiles, their strange looks
 But I don't care.
 But I do care.
 I open my eyes and it's you that's there
 And my heart beats a little faster,
 A train on the wrong track charging at full speed towards
 disaster
 But I don't care.
 I want to collide with you,
 Wrap up and hide with you
 So I can't hear them laugh or see them stare.
 I want to explode around my feelings but I can't light the fuse,
 I'm too scared.
 Would you hold my hand and lead me there,
 Or drop it and just leave me there?

Mum casually drops hints into dinnertime conversations.
 Something about the son of the guy at the post office,
 Apparently his name is Jason,
 But I just want to shatter all of time and space and
 Just create a place for you and me
 To lie together undisturbed.
 A parallel dimension from the mean glares and the harsh words
 That lie like splinters under my skin.

Lord knows I don't want to let them in
 But they're always so unexpected.
 I know I have to get them out before I become infected,
 But they all cut so deep.
 I tried to tweezer them out but they're always out of reach.
 Then I always end up being dragged down as well,
 My own personal devil for my own personal hell
 And we would lie together parallel,
 An angel and a demon
 Both with a story to write and a story to tell,
 Consumed entirely with being ourselves,
 But being one at the same time.
 I can feel your soft fingers intertwined with mine
 Until we melt together.
 And I can honestly say I've never felt better
 Than when I felt my heart fuse to yours.

The suddenly, we're torn apart,
 My flesh rips into sore scars
 That scream the agony of being without you.
 Then I'm back to reality.
 Mum asks if I'm okay because I haven't touched my food,
 But I'm not hungry for anything but another taste of you.

I want to.
 I want to,
 But I never do.
 Words linger on the steep cliff edge of my tongue,
 Unwilling to jump, unwilling to run.
 Not to fall in love, but to leap in
 And drown in it all.
 To fill my lungs with you,

And only you,
Until I am unable to call another's name.

I need to,
I need you
But I am too much of a coward to lead you.
So instead I must play chase.
I will follow your shadow until I've forgotten your face
Because if this is true love,
Then I don't care.
I am lost in myself but I can feel you out there.
I have to find myself or watch you go,
My Juliet, I am your...
Sarah

Lisa Altobelli

FEVERSHAM COLLEGE, TEACHER

I Am Painthorpe First School

I gaze sympathetically at the girl who stands alone, chewing at
her sleeve
Trying to fit in a world she doesn't understand.
I watch silently as she shrinks into the corner, back to the wall,
The mask of her weak smile her only defense against the
elements.

I smell the cold air colliding with the stale stench
Of outdoor toilets. I smell her despair
Mingled with chalk dust.

I taste scraps of Monster Munch
Discarded by the careless, envied by the hungry.
I taste her snot and her tears as she cries silently in my crevices,
hoping noone will hear.

I hear his voice reverberating through the labyrinth of my
corridors.
His anger slaps against my walls;
a tide of fury,
it slams my doors, rattles my windows.

I hold the clammy fingers of her left hand, but she doesn't feel
me.

I caress the limp tangles of her fringe,
stroke the bruises hidden under the creases of her sleeve;
my vain attempt to rub away her pain.

I cannot see that soon I will be bulldozed,
a housing estate will replace my Victorian façade.
For now, I see only the façade of her survival.

At night I dream of her.
Her voice rings out, a siren of fear.
I try to dream her future will be brighter than mine.

Death

I choose not to look
at her eyes which greet me
with undisguised terror.

I focus instead on her feet.
Toes curled, translucent skin – ravaged.
Ready.
They know that my time has come.

I advance.

Now I can smell her decay
It reeks from the folds of her flesh.
Her body, Judas the final betrayer
Succumbs.

Her spirit sprints,
Dances the tarantella,
Jackknifes into murky depths.
In the vain hope that I can't find her.

As I take her
I see cracked opaque lips, work a silent plea
To me, to God, to anyone.
'More time. Not yet.'

I choose not to listen.

Red Group Six-Word Autobiographies

Bianca McConnell-Rhone – quiet, shy, nervous, hilarious, imaginative, creative.

Caryce Brierley – Random, quirky, kind, like a boss.

Ciara Power – I most probably have the power.

Clive Edwin – Motivated, ongoing, hardworking. This is me!

Ikraa Jabeen – Funny. Quiet. Caring. Smile. Love life!

Imani Henry-Bailey – Won't let gravity bring me down.

Kyra Waldram – Thankful for all the great responses.

Lily Douglas – I am the queen of reading.

Mustafa Jibril – Humorous but quiet at some times.

Olivia Keats – Pyjamas are life! They know it.

Oluwatemidayo Olukoga – Funny, soul ball, peace, funny, chick.

Ray Baker – Eat, sleep, make *Doctor Who* references.

Ridaa Babar – Totally inspired by all the writers.

Safeerah Mughal – Painting with a palette of words.

Sarah Tebbs – Rock bands, plot twist, rubber ducks.

Lisa Altobelli – Privileged to be amongst such talent.

Mark Illis – Words, words, words. And family, obviously.

Yellow Group

Aleena Rizvi

JUDGEMEADOW COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Time I Lied about My Apparently Fractured Hand

My hand rested upon the car roof
As I waited there, sitting aloof
Then someone came and slammed the door shut
I did not feel it, I was not hurt.

My sister's crisp packet dropped to the floor
She shouted 'Your hand is stuck in the door'
I turned and laughed because, yes, she was right
It was jammed in the door. What a peculiar sight.

*Do I not feel? What is wrong with me?
Am I human? Do I have a normal body?
Why is it that I am numb?*
I asked these questions as I bit my tongue.

My mum pressed my hand and moved it around
I winced and made a whimpering sound
'It hurts,' I said, 'I can't move it much'
Mum said, 'We'll have to go bandage it up'.

Damaged ligament, supposedly
I was uneasy and slightly guilty

I suppose, after all, they believed my lie
I looked at the bandage and let out a sigh.

I guess, I don't know, I just wanted to feel
I wanted to hurt, I wanted to heal
I wanted to be normal, like everyone else
I want to be comfortable with myself.

Dead Is the Tip of a Butterfly's Wing

Dead looks like a mini lion, lap-sized
Or maybe a warm ball of fur
With sharp eyes and sharp teeth
And secret claws hidden by soft paws
And it sounds of a low purr,
Or a hiss or a meow, depending on the mood
It is a silky river that runs between your fingertips
Dead is a tin of forever
Dead is the tip of a butterfly's wing and the edge of the world
Dead is dangerous, it sinks its teeth into pretending to love you
Or leaves a collection of red lines on your skin
But it can be hurt by neglect or peace
Dead has a secret and the secret is this
Dead is the best friend of living

Amber Rose Solomans

BUTTERSHAW BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE

Allowed to See

Nobody realises
 That all our lives
 We've been lied to.
 That the sea is not just the sea,
 And the sky is not blue,
 And there is so much more than the average eye is
 Allowed to see.

But to me it's clear.
 That the mountain is always too high.
 The moon always too dim.
 The sun always too bright.
 And there is no grey in between, not that we are
 Allowed to see.

It's clear that freedom to love
 Is a bargaining chip
 We have to pay for.
 A liberty that not all can afford
 A world built of grey that we are not
 Allowed to see

So, why bother trying?
 Well the victory is sweet
 And it swells in your heart
 Like the tide along the shore.
 Not that it matters, for we are not
 Allowed to see.

Amina Aden

WOODSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Aluminium Soldiers

Discipline. Strength. Courage.
Three laws to create the mould
To begin the gradual morphing of a mortal
Into this savage soul.

They mass produce us all
An avalanche of imitations
Each snowflake, each man
A former individual
Melting into one nation.

They burn us, drown us then burn us again,
A cyclical motion
Spiralling down, down, down
Down into the Devil's den,

Where those villains reside
Creating intricate ornaments like us.
Well, come a little closer
And you'll hear the resolute cry:
'ENOUGH!'

Always Near

Another aspiring youth departs
Heading for that world
Though the world is delighted
It kindly invites him in
Grinning, eyes glinting
This boy, he should be frightened

Frightened from the lurking stalker
That lingers in the darkest shadows
Preparing for some labour
Many exotic flavours
Which he would be more than happy to savour
I licked my lips
'How delicious'

But this moment is tarnished
By the foul taste of goodness
Stemming from the light surrounding the boy
Closer than I could ever be
Too close.

Bhagya Suwandarachchi

JUDGEMEADOW COMMUNITY COLLEGE

When I Told the Boy My Brother Was UK Junior Lightweight Champion

I'm a Feminist,
Cold, hard and true,
So when you told me I couldn't play football,
Though all the boys belonging to other classes allowed their
girls to,
I quite simply, quite generously, wanted to kill you,
Repeatedly, unthawed AND un-flattered,
Reasonably polite and nice, mind, I asked you,
You sneered and in great mockery,
Remarked 'Piss off,'
Igniting conflict, encouraging much pain,

Feeling such emotion was plain stupidity, believe me, I now
know,
But back in those days, when youth was riper too,
It was as powerful as sayin', 'fudge you/fudge off,'
If I'd snitched to Mr Pritchard,
I realise now, you'd probably have got kicked off,
But NO! I lied, threatened you with the presence of a sixteen-
year-old UK Junior Lightweight Champion,

A bit harsh maybe, guess a little mean,

But then a friend of yours,
– Who's unfortunately been round mine – told you I was lying,
'Till that point, your desperate pleadin', and guilty slavery for
forgiveness, the way you treated me,
Scared to the point of heady nausea, that I might tell,
Internally with splittin' laughter I was cryin',

It was short-lived,
My little-big fib,
You were furious, angry, wanted revenge,
After all, it was YOUR reputation you wanted to avenge,
So... as expected I found my book bag one day,
Emptied,
But PLEASE!!!!!!
One, how could you be sooo low,
AND two, Year 5,
Book bags are practically empty apart from pre-historic, old
newsletters, you know,

I am a Feminist,
Cold, hard and true,
Damn, I wish I had lied harder, better, meaner to you,
I wish, I WISH, I had told the next day,
When terrified you offered me that football match I'd ALWAYS
wanted to play,
That my elder brothers were comin' to collect me,
That in fact, I had THREE,
That my family kept the title,
Unchallenged and undefeated,
Oh! And my mistake...

It was the UK Junior HEAVYweight Champions you were
meetin',

Remember,
I am a Feminist,
Cold, hard and true,
Watch you back dear arch nemesis,
I'm after YOU.

Connor Brimelow

ACLAND BURGHLEY SCHOOL

The Blue Sand Incident

A Year 6 classroom is the place of crime
Date: 18th of October, 1:30 is the time.
I walk past a table, a flask in my hand.
I put it down it down carefully, next to a bowl of sand.
Nobody's looking; I pour it in,
The sand turns blue and starts to spin.
It bubbles. It boils, the juices flow.
Then to my horror, it starts to grow.
I walk away briskly, then walk some more.
As my creation slithers across table and floor.
It coats the chairs in Aqua Marine.
And then the kids begin to scream.

The next day, break time, the class is fixed with a glare.
By Miss Bud, with her undying, psychotic stare.
'I tell you, whoever did this *will* pay the fine!
My goodness, all year they'll be in at lunch time!'
Now as you'd expect, this sounded pretty bad.
Especially after the fun I had had.
So I kept my mouth closed, sealed so tight.
But inside, I felt bad, it just wasn't right,
Tearing right through my head, like bad, bad head lice.
And some of my classmates, well they paid my price.
Then he rose, out of anger, like a flaming steel knife.
Ikram, my nemesis, for the rest of my life.

Looking back on it now, the lie wasn't great.
 It makes me feel guilty. And Ikram still hates.
 Wasn't worth all the blue sand, and yes it was fun,
 But I couldn't, the war with Ikram, had already begun.
 Wet each other. Slapped each other. Kicked each other's butts.
 I apologise, Ikram.

But I still hate your guts.

The Gang

I grasped my token and stepped into the most dangerous place in town (and where I work): The Wildlife Reservation Park. They'd be waiting. I heard the familiar sound of a spinning roulette wheel, and saw them, clustered together. All wearing fingerless gloves. Tinted shades. A spliff in their mouth. I had to be assertive. My feet began to force me towards them.

'Oi boss!' laughed one, 'Look 'oo it is!' The hedgehogs turned around. Yes I said hedgehogs. Ever since my employer started putting LSD in the seeds we feed them, they haven't quite been the same.

'All right,' grinned boss-hog, their unofficial leader who just so happened to have the word 'boss' in his name. The hedgehogs hop onto one another, making a little tower of rodents. Boss-hog was at the top, just meeting my eye-level, spines adorably splayed.

Elysia Brown

BUTTERSHAW BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE

Ruffled Suit

Home sails through a cloudy night
 Stars swaying to the layered piece
 That sews twilight to morning with a silver thread
 A lone figure hums with a soft smile
 Remembering

A stranger in a ruffled suit, opened a portal
 To a land on the sea
 Where the restless waves began to rage
 She woke alone – stolen from the cradle of a gentle ocean wave

Cracked earth biting worn feet
 A friend in a ruffled suit appeared
 Carrying a day of peace

Morning stole their luck and way
 Furious winds began their chase
 Panic, racing, gasp. Escape.
 A someone in a ruffled suit as guide

The someone in a ruffled suit
 Accepted the kiss of the warm waters
 Held out a hand, full of light and promises
 Danced to the silent melody of laughter

Watched the tide over decades flown by
 Fading to a ghostly smile on the lips
 Of the lonely figure who hums, remembering
 Love, dressed in a ruffled suit.

Faaduma Aden

WOODSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

All I Know Is

All I know is, I'm cold
 Surrounded by darkness
 Blood trickling down my face
 Blood... Red, I need to remember that.

All I know is my fingers are growing numb
 My teeth are chattering
 My eyes are adjusting
 Something's in front of me
 A hoody
 It looks warm

All I know is, I have no name
 Therefore I'll be nameless
 And aimless for now

All I know is, the hoody's creepy
 I can see a little better now
 It looks red
 Blood red

All I know is I'm human
 Or I wish to be it
 Or I was it

Maybe I'm not it
 For now
 I am human

All I know is, I'm in a room
 Should I move?
 Maybe I should
 But what if?
 What if something bad happens
 What if I die
 What if I'm already dead?
 Anyway I should go

All I know is, I'm sad
 I'm scared
 Why?

All I know is, it's dark outside
 There's snow, but I'm warm
 I walk
 It's hard
 Did I get hurt?
 I don't know
 Where am I going?
 I don't know

All I know is, I'm falling
 I feel pain
 I see red
 Oh there it is again

Normal

Normal looks like
 The night
 Long and never ending
 Thick with fat and muscles
 Dull yellow eyes that stab into souls
 Fangs that secrete the elixir of death

Normal sounds like
 Death hunting its prey
 Its hisses slice the air
 Silence.

Normal has a snake-like body
 Slithers across the ground
 Silently

Normal smells like
 Corpses with a hint of blood and sweat

Normal is dangerous
 Because
 It might kill you
 It might petrify you
 It might end up in your nightmares
 But more than anything
 It's forever present
 Waiting for you

It can be hurt by
Nothingness
Maybe you

Normal has a secret
And its secret is this
Fear.

5 AM

5 am. I drag myself out of bed, to destroy the wailing alarm clock. Small sacrifice for a greater good. A slight noise downstairs peaks my interest. Curiosity gets the better of me. I walk down the stairs wooden and cold beneath my feet. In darkness, as per my usual daily routine. Perhaps I can have an actual change today. A thief, a spy, even a murderer. Just someone to keep me company.

I use my feet to feel my way to the place I guess the noise originated from. There it is again, a slight *tap tap*, coming from... oh, the door; I got my hopes up to soon. I motion towards it. It creaks open mirroring my fear, agony. It's open. On the other side was him. I dreaded this day, but dreading it didn't stop it. I had to face it.

His smug smile was the first thing that appeared. Perfect lips parted slightly to show perfect teeth. A hint of a beard on his chin. Broad shoulders. His hair brushed to the side. Crispy blond. Handsome blue eyes. Pale skin that glimmers in the sun. He was perfect and I hated him.

'Missed me?' he asked sarcastically.

No.

I didn't say anything. You shouldn't, not to him. Hatred runs pure through his veins. Instead I walked back inside, and so did he.

'What's with the sad faaace?' He faked a frown.

I despise him. Go out this f***ing door right now and drown yourself in a lake, you shi** bas****!!

'Don't frown.' His faced tensed. Shit – he's serious.

Daily routines are mundane, but they're safe.

Jack White

JUDGEMEADOW COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Brief Connection with Nature

As you traverse stable woodland,
 Bypassing vicious stinging nettles along with some less-appealing
 flowers,
 You greet a tree in deep slumber ripe to perch on,
 You hear the distant rustling of leaves and mellow winds,
 While observing the vast array of budding saplings,
 You try your hardest not to have your eyes stray to the
 man-made car park,
 So as not to kill your deep immersion in this wonderland,
 You see your extensive pathway end at the base of a redwood,
 As you are elevated to the peak you find the fresh breeze graze
 your lifted skin,
 The broad tree welcomes your arrival and creates a mould for
 you to sit in out of the clean, untouched leaves,
 Let the common fear of heights dissipate as it is replaced by an
 inhuman emotion that exceeds elation,
 The feeling of tranquillity,
 The feeling that you stay stationed in that one spot for the rest
 of eternity,
 Let the wacky clouds be your entertainment,
 The contorted yet somehow perfect structure of the branches
 be your resting place,
 But then put it all into perspective,
 All you are doing is sitting on the top of a tree,

And that's an extraordinary thing,
 That such a brief connection with nature can spark such a
 surreal feeling,
 And allow you to be intertwined with the world's beauty.

Recipe

'Ello ladies and gentlemen, my name's Jack White,
 And welcome to *Recipes for the World*,
 Tonight we are going to be rearranging the alphabet,
 Putting things where they need to be,
 Diluting the injustice and adding a pinch of acceptance,
 Chiselled racial slurs that crack bones,
 Forget 'em,
 How dare you not say you're a feminist,
 Meninists, they're gone,
 Our emotional knives are sharpened,
 Every time you throw an insult,
 Not all of us are gonna catch 'em,
 These knives cut deeper than flesh and organs,
 They reach your soul,
 And that bloodied knife is now blunt,
 First drenched now stained with dried tears,
 And now the cogs in your brain,
 They stop...
 And go backwards through the years,
 And now you look in the mirror,
 Past your disguise and ask,
 Who am I?
 The most valuable asset we humans have is the power to accept,
 progress,
 And form relationships,
 What more do you need?

Laura Rose

CHENEY SCHOOL

To Be Happy

To be happy,
 You need the feeling of the cold hard sky,
 The sound of the wind,
 And the sight of a thousand bright clouds,
 You need the smell of soil underfoot.

To be happy,
 You need the feeling of the softest drop of water,
 The sound of the world spinning underneath you,
 The sight of a squirrel scampering up a tree,
 You need the smell of each blade of grass.

To be happy,
 You need the taste of the first snowflake of winter,
 The sight of frost upon leaves,
 The feeling of sharp ice on your finger,
 You need the the sound of footprints in snow.

Lilian Yeboah Darteh

GLOUCESTER ACADEMY

These Songs of Harmony

As the symphony starts,
A siren with her enticing voice lures us in,
And the tides of the waves crash but,
Nevertheless the voice carries on,

The tempo increases,
The pitch gets higher,
The tempo increases,

A choir of angels come out of the heavens
With a resounding voice,

Crescendo!

It's like the messiah himself was conducting
A light, freedom,

Stop,

Wait,

Breath,

Then it continues,
A never-ending symphony.

Raihan Islam

CHENEY SCHOOL

The Wind Up Key

OMG! Look at that thing it's so shiny. Ohhh it's golden, looks like some wind up key. I hope it's not like in those boring books where you find something and it teleports you to some place. I'll just keep it in my kebab box for safekeeping. Gotta get to my 250m race. Nobody thinks I'm gonna win – I'm known as the 'fat kid' who can't do anything. I'll show 'em all by winning that race... after I eat my Dairy Milk. Nom Nom Nom... AHHHHHHH! Where am I? Oh come on seriously I've got no time for wormholes, wonder where I'll go! Oh crap I'm being a boring book nooooooooooooo!

The Cricket Ball

He woke up in his house or mansion, he didn't know [odd] and banged his head on the ceiling and heard a metallic sound-CLANG! He got out of bed and checked his room, there was nothing... except one cricket ball and then he remembered he used to play cricket and was the best player ever. It had his signature which said 'Sachin Tendulkar'. He was part of Team India and had won many World Cups as well as being the first person to get one hundred centuries in matches. When he went into the bathroom to brush his teeth he saw something terrible in the mirror... he had no head; instead he was a cricket-playing android who was unstoppable. He was basically a one man team. It had all come back – the evil business men paid billions of pounds to turn him into the android he is now. They had got rid of his memory and instead transplanted memories of losing and failure as well as the will to win every cricket match. The business men were evil greedy money pigs. They had done this so they could make money as long as they lived.

Alice Shepherd

SKINNERS' ACADEMY, TEACHER

Perfection

They live up there and you live down here
Because you are not worthy.

They wear thin fabrics that fall
Into
Crevasses
Of sexuality.
But they do not touch –
They are above that.

You wear a heavy canvas,
It sits almost grooved into your skin –
So well used; infused.
You try to find patches
Of
Smooth
Skin
Yourself but it seems impossible.

I watch from between their place
And yours
With eager eyes darting between your
Off
Kilter
Symmetry.

A paper thin glass line separates you.

Plates of plump meats and fertile fruits occupy mahogany tables.

You question –

“What is Mahogany?”

It feels familiar.

“Where does it come from?”

I bring people like you here sometimes.

Just to remind myself of my purpose.

I lay you horizontal against the fine barrier.

Your nose presses against the glass

So close it appears to bend

In the M

E

E

T

I

N

G

Of you and your reflection.

I watch you.

You see them –

Their creamy whiteness and you blush

And try to hide yourself,

You're scared.

The small flicker of your hand as your mind reels,

Give you away.

My eyes become heavy.

They live up there.

You live down here.

And I made it this way.

Orange Group

Aisha Saujani

LOXFORD SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Shopping List

Hidden behind square-framed spectacles,
which sit on the tip of her nose.
The wise ones can spot she is a
child deep inside, but she hides her true colours behind her
layered mask.
Her shoulders carry the weight of all the children
who blame her for exacerbating their anxiety.

Anyone Like You...

I have never met anyone like *you*, anyone who isn't bothered by anything. As cool as a cat! Never irritated by *anyone* or *anything*. Anything, *anything*. Where did you come from? How come I have never met anyone like you before? How I wish I was you! So tranquil and peaceful, only patches of love at heart. Oh, it must be so difficult, I am extremely proud of you. *Could we swap personalities?* I think it's possible and I could learn from you... You could teach me, just like at school. If I ever have a question I will stick my hand up. I promise, I will wait patiently.
Please, I am in desperate need of your help!

The Inner You

A simple smile,
A cheerful clap.
It goes for miles,
Criss-crossing over the map.

Opening your arms,
Washing the dishes,
Untangling piles of yarn,
Or even feeding the fishes.

Revealing your inner emotions,
Without creating fuss or commotions,
Providing constructive criticisms,
To empower multiple organisms.

Follow this simple guide,
To abandon '*Me, Myself and I*',
And you'll find yourself,
Becoming a nurturing, giving elf.

A Vacuum of Thought

A vacuum between her ear and my mouth,
Sucking every breath I ever spent on her,
Every lie that I let her soul absorb.

Breaking the puzzle she created with the facts of my soul.
Destroying any forces of attraction between each puzzle piece,
I being the foe of the Magnet

She didn't deserve all the secrets and lies.
Lying still at dawn, listening to me weeping
Wondering how she could have been a better mother.

I wish we would pull closer together by breaking further apart.
Choking the memory of straining her with a newborn,
Blanking out the responsibilities that I could never handle.

I wish we could converse like a normal mother and daughter
again
'Darling, how was your day today?'

Amber Morgan

QUEEN ELIZABETH ACADEMY

Kind Deeds

In school, my friend was in the so-called 'popular' group. She was the quiet type. Like me, she did not have the courage to stand up for herself. Her 'friends' began to pick on her and call her names, whilst telling her that it was just a joke. Everyone knew that this most certainly was not a joke. She may have struggled with a few pimples added to her appearance, but everyone crosses that bridge at some point in their life. They would push her about and call her things such as a 'skank', 'tramp' and any other unnecessary insult that they could think of. It reminded me of my sister. The same thing happened to her; except they bullied her to the point that she got depression. It made me so aggravated to think someone could sink so low. Was it because others had done the same thing to them? Did they just think they were better, because of what, their appearance?! This time I decided it was past time to halt the cycle. As they continued to insult her, I stepped forwards and said, 'No, your attitude absolutely disgusts me. Just stop it.' The feeling of doing a kind deed is much more satisfying than making someone else feel insecure.

Folasade Alaka

LOXFORD SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Skull and Crossbones

Bones and headstones, under a black sky.
Fog and mist in tune with a cry.

I hear the moaning in your mind and the fear in your tears.
I want to reach out and lift you from the grave.
Unless of course there is nothing left to save.

I'll leave your heart on a cross and a scar on your skull,
A lasting sensation on your soul.

Hannah Mohamed

CRANFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Power

Being misunderstood may be the single most unnerving concept there is. Being misunderstood is inevitable. I am told, quite frequently in fact, that I think differently. Quite frequently in fact, I am told that this is a good thing. But I see no good in being a social outcast. I see no good in feeling hurt because everyone you know is incapable of mentally grasping all that you are. I see no good in being vilified for knowing too much. See, that's why we're said to think differently, you and I; we know more. So I see no good in possessing knowledge, I see power.

And You

Can't drown your demons if they know how to swim
 Can't block out the voices once they start to sing,
 louder and louder and louder and loud.
 Please try to break free, please don't be a coward
 and don't do it for me, do it for yourself.

My wings have been chained and I can't be of help
 with the shackles of insecurity and lack of my self worth
 and the tiny little shreds of my big broken world
 and my mind and my heart and my soul and my girl,
 the one who screams and whose voices I hear whirl
 and whizz and whoosh and then...
 stop.

And you,
 back to you,
 you're at the edge of the cliff
 with a knife at your wrist,
 and a noose round your neck

and I'm sorry for going on about myself
 but I've reached my breaking point and I don't have anyone left
 and I don't have a purpose and I don't have a home
 and I don't have anything to call my own
 except for you, to be honest

but you're about to leave,
 so I'll follow if you go,
 so go,
 say goodbye to the forest.

Husman Khan

DIXONS ALLERTON ACADEMY

A Trip Down Memory Lane

It lay there. In a pool of blood. Deserted and left to die in the corner. A man's best friend. Marco's best friend. It lay there, so still, so cold, so vulnerable. The cell was just as cold, just as strange, and just as abnormal. The cracks and marks that were scattered across the walls had a faded complexion; a complexion that exuded death nonetheless. Marco stood up, awoken by the claps of thunder outside. His face was covered in grime, his body pale and lifeless. The death-marks on the iron bars that enclosed the cell began to glow red. A sign that the hour was near and that he would be released. Killed that is. And when the hour arrives, Marco best be ready. It can turn painful quickly. Marco looked around, scanning the prison cell for any item he could use to escape.

But to no avail, his search failed and concluded at the feet of a royal guard. A big brute of a man with a strong bearing and scars on his face that were left over from blade shaving. But the guard seemed to have legs behind him. Legs that seemed too small for his overwhelming stature and would perhaps snap like twigs if they were exposed to the sheer weight.

'Let me pass!' shouted the short man. 'I have the decree!' he shouted again, this time in a bid to scare the guard into the serious consequences they would bear as result of this.

'Show me!' demanded the guard.

Lauren Baker

THE OXFORD ACADEMY

Reverse

The man pushes the door and walks into the room backwards. His hand releases the handle as he continues walking.

He stops when he is beside a kneeling woman.

Her tears crawl up her cheeks and into her eyes, erasing the streaks of makeup from her face.

The man's foot, on the woman's back, bounces off, decelerates to a curled position behind him and rests on the floor.

The woman's blood sucks into her quivering lip, removing the red stain from her chin.

The woman's knees rise from the ground, along with her hands, her body standing straight and her long, brown hair hanging down.

The man's fist pulls away from her face to rest at his side.

Matthew Gudelajtis

QUEEN ELIZABETH ACADEMY

Final Thoughts

I wonder, how long has it been? How long have I been reduced to nothing, laying in this bed in absolute silence?

No matter how much effort I use to focus, I cannot recall. Every time I try to think about the past, an intense throbbing pain blocks my path.

I'm sure I used to be healthier than this though, meaning my condition is deteriorating. Not something you expect to hear from a seventeen-year-old. I cannot walk unaided and must do so with a crutch firmly clasped onto each of my arms. I have not the balance to stand on my own two feet or the strength to hold onto my crutches.

You'd expect to see someone of my state laying in a hospital bed; I did too. I question it even now. But I was told that there is no point. I am beyond anyone's help.

But that does not necessarily mean that I am alone in this dismal apartment. I am graced by the presence of a beautiful young girl, around my own age, whose name either faded from my mind or never entered my head to begin with. Regardless, she has shown me unending kindness in our time together, yet that has brought pain to my heart. You see, I lack the simple ability to say 'thank you' to this girl.

My condition has stolen my voice.

I am a mere hollow husk of a person. Why am I even alive?

I know that already though: I'm just too kind. This girl, she

wants me to keep living. Even though she's never said it, I know. Whether it is out of pure kindness for me or just a selfish desire of hers, I do not care. I'm kind enough to live for her sake.

So, I guess I have a kind nature, seeing as I want to help this girl I do not know. Actually, that isn't entirely true. When she smiles at me, that beautiful and gleaming smile, I think I remember something I did, or rather, I didn't do.

In the past, I was a stubborn coward, perhaps to her or another. I was unable to force out three incredibly simple words. Even now, I fail to do so, although the reason for that has changed.

To this charismatic girl, I want to speak those words. Yet, no matter how solid my resolve, my lips merely quiver and I realise how weak I am and how futile trying is.

But at least now I can accept my intention to say those words.

I love you.

Even though I may never tell her my feelings, I shall revel in the fact that this girl will refuse to leave my side, even if I try to push her away. Well, I'm not a dense person, though I may have been before. I know how she feels too, even if she herself is too shy to say it aloud. Why else would she remain beside someone like me?

So that is the relationship: a silent cohabitation where words are not needed between us. I doubt she knows that I have forgotten, then again, I doubt that she would care.

I feel sorry for this girl: this kind, wonderful young girl that I love. When I inevitably die, what will she do? How will she feel?

If only I could ask her.

Until I die, wondering and thinking are all I can do.

I cannot be kind enough, I cannot be healed, and worst of all I am unable to embrace this girl before me.

Such a sweet young girl.

Opal Florey

THE OXFORD ACADEMY

Vampires

Chapter 1

Walking downstairs, I sigh at the empty house. I notice the note on the door from my mother. It says:

Dearest Vanessa,

Victor and I have gone to the doctors, listen to
your sister, see you after school,

Victoria xx

Of course my mother booked a doctor's appointment on my birthday. Yay! Today's my 14th birthday.

'Oh there you are!' my sister, Olana, exclaims. She walks down the last couple of steps and hands me a box. Opening the box, I gasp. My sister had given me a purple microphone necklace with a V in a heart.

'Can you put it on for me?' I ask, handing the necklace to her. She plays around with the clasp, trying to open it. I help her open it and then turn around, pulling my hair up. She puts it on for me and, walking around to face me, she hugs me, crying. I can tell she's crying because I feel the splatters of water hitting my neck.

'I need to tell you something before you leave for school.' Pulling away from the hug, I question what she means but she just pushes me towards the stairs saying how I'm going to be late for school and that I better rush. I run up the stairs skipping steps

at a time, and burst into my room, falling over in the process. I stand up and grab my hair brush, yanking it through my knotted brown hair. I look at the outfit laid out for me by my mother and sigh. It was a plain grey dress and grey tights, combined with black ankle boots. I slip my clothes on and start to pull my hair up into a ponytail. Grabbing my phone off charge, I start playing 'Damaged' by Jedna Calra. I listen until I get to my favorite part. 'Will I ever stop being damaged, please tell me if I will?' and I start singing along. I pay close attention to the lyrics, hoping I can get a deeper look into the song. Jedna is my favorite singer; I can never forget any of her songs. Walking down the stairs, I say goodbye to my sister before and rush out the door, grabbing my backpack in the process. Sat on the fence, swinging her legs was my best friend, Ixa. She was wearing a white crop top with black skinny jeans and green Converse. She had her earphones in, her blonde hair pulled up into a plait. She was oblivious to the fact that I was there and I was determined to change that. I climb onto the chair in the garden, and sit on the fence next to Ixa, making my presence known.

'Finally!' she exclaims laughing, flashing off her white braces. She climbs off the gate as do I and we nod at each other laughing at our stupidity. We start walking to school, when I realise my sister didn't tell me what she wanted to tell me, and I had left my phone at home, blaring music. Sighing, I glance at Ixa and she looks at me, fear clouded in her eyes, her finger pointing towards the other side of the road. A guy stands there, looking at us, glowing blue. We look at each other and we start running, hearing footsteps behind us. We reach school and as we look behind us we notice that the figure is growling and walking away. We shudder and hurry, late to school.

Priya Kana

LOXFORD SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Incident

An angry sister.
Threads tugged out by my mother,
Looking in horror.
She viciously rips the green threads out of the material.

A hole in my oldest sister's trousers,
Stained, brown and combined with stinging fumes.
Staring with knowing eyes,
I proudly take it away.

I look in disbelief.
I can fix it.
I place the trousers on a flat softened surface.
The metal heated plate.

The hole shrinks back like a flower at night.
The fabrics intertwine and grab onto each other.
It disappears, all patched up.
No visible scars on the green trousers anymore.

S. Nameerah Ahmed

CRANFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dare To Be

The need to be free
Is almost higher than my priority to breathe.
I've been dreaming about escaping,
Pausing life and taking off.

Warm southern breeze dancing through the air,
Skimming over my still sleepy skin.
Basking in the Mediterranean sun
Before spreading my wings.

Hop on a hot air balloon in Cappadocia maybe
How my mum would be transfixed by the fairy chimneys,
Spires of rock gently caressed and sculpted by the wind.
Above lie the magical or at least so we dream

Aurora Borealis, the usual cloud-ridden sky made void
Now only streaks of azure and turquoise.
Leaping, hair pulled back, air rushing past my face
Relying on only a cord to determine my fate

The many, many things I'd like to do
To slit the throat of my numbness, break it in two
Stick it to the people who made assumptions
Because I define myself – regardless

Untitled

I am made up of many different things
In my left arm there is a part of a distant realm
And before my trim, my locks had some supernova in them.
And you see,
The gunpowder that Fawkes tried to use
Is sprinkled across my collarbone.
The creps you checked out in JD the other day
Now I wasn't gonna say...
But the rubber trader who's mad underpaid
His carburettor's fuel is running through my bloodstream.
The left side of my cheek
Is comprised of mature blue cheese.
Fragments of determination fall from the roof of the O2 Arena
As do the thuds of both my boots
And my heart.
My neurons pass thoughts of freedom
in the pattern of Che Guevara's socks.
Smuts of ash cascading through Pompeii are found in my calves
As I climbed Vesuvius in a day.
All these things that make me, me
Are not just limited to my parents or my genes.
They're from all over our atom-filled galaxy.

Seren Robb

BRADFORD ACADEMY

Candle

With one in-breath,
The candle's life is restored.

It begins to grow,
Waxy blobs climbing up its body,
Till it stands pristine and tall.

Then a lighter is brought forth.
It devours the candle's flame,
Plunging the room into darkness.

A hand takes the candle,
And discards it in a box,
Among the corpses of its brethren.

Chaos

I will put chaos into fourteen lines,
For it is by fire that the world will drown.
The fish in the sky,
The cats are in the sea.
The dog's tail is chasing it.
Birds aren't singing they're afraid of heights.
Puzzle pieces are black and white.
The dice are one sided.
The sun stole the stars.
The stairs are in protest against the elevators,
The elevators refuse to move without them.
Pretty much the only sane beings are the rocks,
And even they'll join the riot.
The world is wonderfully mad...
Isn't it terrible?

Suhur Mohamed

CRANFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Blank Canvas

A blank canvas
A fresh start
A way to stop myself
From falling apart

I dream to not be enclosed in these four walls that are draining
every ounce of life out of me
To escape the irony of the tattered Einstein poster in the corner
telling me that imagination is more important than
knowledge
To drift away from being told that the fantastical doodles of my
fantasies will never be good enough
But no
Not even a second till I hear the shriek of my English teacher
telling me that my success is hanging on for dear life unless I
snap out of my silly daydreams

Silly

That's always the adjective used to describe everything that isn't
affiliated with the 'normal' concept of constantly cramming
inadequate crap loads of information in my brain
Solely
Created for the purpose of dulling down my thoughts

Crushing my aspirations of being the first non-American female
President of the United States

A blank canvas
A fresh start
An attempt to stop myself
From falling apart

I don't understand why it's so difficult for them to grasp the fact
that children are NOT robotic machines
Just for them to comprehend that these 'silly' thoughts are what
create this illustrious society with the abilities to challenge
the beliefs of those who thought they were once right
Those who ran the slave trade and took it upon themselves to
abolish the rights of another human being
Those who thought that a ship journey would eventually take
them off the face of the earth
Those who believed that their feet would never get the pleasure
of gracing another planet

A blank canvas
A fresh start
A halt at stopping myself
From falling apart

It seems to be a stream of obstacles just to take a stand to this
injustice when my age diminishes the significance of my
opinion.
When a net of doubt heightens my inhibitions
When a monstrous wall obscures my visions

For now, I am forced to surrender
For now...

Zaara Balma Baba Abdul-Latif

DIXONS ALLERTON ACADEMY

Falling

I walk towards the edge of the cliff,
Knowing what to do next,
I try to remember my drum riff,
And what happened after the hex.

I jump, I fall,
Not caring anymore,
Life was like a long hall,
And I never wanted its gore.

I wanted to be free,
No one to interrupt,
It didn't matter what happened to me,
The world was already corrupt.

I wanted out,
I wanted to be put out of my misery,
I didn't want to scream, I didn't want to shout,
I wanted to go desperately.

The world was problematic,
Not because I was dramatic.

Orange Group Six-Word Autobiographies

Aisha Saujani – My laughter provides warmth and comfort.

Amber Morgan – Powerful voice; a look of confidence.

Folasade Alaka – Shy, curly-haired, tie-obsessed, dancer.

Hannah Mohamed – Spreading positive energy all day long.

Husman Khan – I've lied, learned and everything in-between.

Lauren Baker – Spreading the message #JustCarryOn

Matthew Gudelajtis – Russian voice, science fiction, depressing writing.

Opal Florey – (is) kind, funny, bubbly, energetic, hyper, FABULOUS.

S. Nameerah Ahmed – Perception is more important than reality.

Seren Robb – Good at voices, dark imagination, bookworm.

Suhur Mohamed – A watermelon tree's growing inside me.

Zaara Balma Baba Abdul-Latif – Spread my wings and fly #Fabulous.

Green Group

Alaa Musa

KING SOLOMAN ACADEMY

When Death Comes

When death comes
 People are often distraught.
 Some cry out in pain;
 Others are silent in their suffering.
 Either way, they are suffering.

Some people celebrate death.
 ‘Good riddance,’ they might say.
 Others aren’t so harsh.
 They may think, ‘Well, he or she
 is no longer struggling.’

Death took someone away from me once.
 Someone I cared about so dearly.
 It has done so for too many.
 But death isn’t so brutal.
 Sometimes it will wait for the exact right moment.

Other times, however,
 Death will refuse to wait.
 You can hope, pray,
 Give everything you have
 But death will refuse to wait.

I am afraid of death.
 I want it to stay as far away from me as possible.
 But I know that it will come.
 So I will make sure that I live while I am alive
 So that I am ready
 When death comes.

Are You Our Sort of Person?

Are you our sort of person?
 Do you have long blonde hair, a pearly white smile?
 Do you have large blue eyes that lighten up and shimmer in the
 spotlight?
 Do you have clear, fair, *perfect* skin? With no acne, blotches,
 spots?
 Are you super skinny? Are your legs really long and are your
 ribs and collar bone visible through your skin?
 Do you have a flat stomach?
 Do you have a thigh gap?
 Do you have really curvy curves?
 Are you *at least* a D-cup?
 Does your arse look good when you wear those tight jeans?
 Can you walk straight in those 6-inch Louis Vuitton heels?

If not, then we cannot accept you.
 You’re not our sort of person.

Arlo Brown

BANOVALUM SCHOOL

Heart Monitor

Picture a heart rate monitor/ that's hooked to someone
remotely/ for their whole life./ it begins with a flat line./ Then
the heart begins to beat/ and the monitor gets those spikes on its
graph./ Now imagine those heart beat readings/as mountains,
mountains that you have to climb./ some mountains are smaller
easier, almost gentle hills,/ but other/ condescending peaks/
almost stop you in your tracks./ You lose the oxygen/ and your
respiratory system begins to fail you/ and you start to drown in
air./ The lactic acid in your muscles/ makes you want to howl in
pain and frustration as it corrodes your body./ And the sorrow
that comes with the knowledge/ that there'll only be another
mountain after this one./ while your hearts beating/ you feel this
rhythmically with no leeway./ life puts you through this strife
and suffering/ that you may or may not deserve/ and there's so
many times/ when you could just drop and give up/ but you
keep pushing blindly/ without knowing when it will end./
Then/ you flat line./ And you're right back where you started./
You did all that effort in,/ all that energy,/ all those joules and
calories,/ out of your own volition,/ to go in a full circle./ you
did all that to break even./ You've been cheated.

Fatima Khan

WEMBLEY HIGH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

They Say

They say your life flashes before your eyes when you die.
They say you should make it worth watching.
They say to create framed memories
Of laughter,
peace,
love.
To ignore trials and tribulations,
pain and powerlessness.

They say to imagine
the sky is your cinema,
as the sun forces a blaze of rays at sunset.
They say to burn with passion,
Paint the oceans.
To become Matisse.

They say to dye your hair a shade lighter and get a tattoo sleeve.
They say to eat different cuisines and go to vibrant clubs on
New Year's Eve.

They say to be as honest as statues,
And mercifully kind, brave and sympathetic.
They say to go the gym, to give to charity.
They say to try and fit in,

but
Break out the prison bars life hammers within you.

They say to be reckless, fearless, doubtless,
To never fear.
They say if you're timid and shy you may as well not be here.
They say summer is your canvas to sketch scenes of
Chaotic beauty.
Don't use pale pastels, use fluorescent colours.
Capture images with the windows within you,
create coffee-stained newspapers and
smoke unlit cigarettes.

They say to have raging courage,
To be the one defiant rock on the coast.
Be an explorer, a risk taker, an adventurer,
unveil the world that you live in.
Get married. Have children. Get rich.

They say your life flashes before your eyes when you die.
They say you should make it worth watching.

But,
What they say, is it really living
Or are you just preparing to die?

Georgia Mae Caine

PIMLICO ACADEMY

Jigsaw

The mixture, liquid, pasty and translucent, slowly sucked its way from the white china bowl which was perched on the edge of the gleaming kitchen surface, with the salt and pepper shakers neatly by its side.

From the yolk, to the white, to the residue that clung to the bottom of the bowl like a baby to its mother, the mixture was an elegant pack of birds, soaring through the open air.

They were together, in tune, and nothing could stop them from flying back to their warm, cosy nest. The whole time, the mixture stuck together, but gradually collected itself into the two halves of the cracked and fractured shell, coming together like a finished jigsaw.

They form the egg.

The cracks smooth over and disappear as the egg creates its perfect oval-ish shape again in the palm of my hand.

Day One of the Residential

My legs feel heavy like cement as I drag myself towards the meeting point.

The meeting point, my own school, where I'd been for three whole years, yet felt so unfamiliar at the same time.

Fingers shaking, pitter-pattering on the handle of my bag.

Incessantly biting my lip as I wave goodbye to the familiar smell of home.

There go massive tower blocks, booming signs, here come trees and cows and field upon field.

A weird, inexplicable shiver is sent down my back as I step off the coach.

Breathing in new air, fresher than the usual petrol-filled air that is London and my home.

Boy

I left the café with my sister and friend, we giggled and chatted incessantly. It was an average spring afternoon, and the sun was beaming with joy. I looked around and noticed a boy, no older than thirteen or younger than eleven, in the distance by himself. His face was screwed up, his shoulders were hunched, his clothes were dirty and shoes tattered.

Was he okay?

What happened to him?

Was he lost?

For a second, we made eye contact, and it was as if his dark brown, almost black eyes were a laser burning a hole through me. He wore a deep glare on his face with permanently down-turned eyebrows. His whole demeanour was hostile. It was as if he'd used his eyes to cajole everyone on his side of the street to cross over or move away. He stood, rooted, on a deserted pavement, while a large crowd grew exponentially around me on the other side. Sympathy for him grew inside me and I desperately wanted to help him.

I wanted to know his story.

I suddenly surged forward with the ever-growing crowd, and I was separated from his angry gaze.

I got on the bus home with my sister and friend.

These Things I Know

Excuses don't get you anywhere at school, so there's no use trying.
 Absolutely be yourself because everyone else is taken and nobody likes an identity thief.
 Remember that the bus won't always come at 7:57 a.m., and when it's late, there's nothing you can do.
 You just have to deal with it.
 People aren't always going to say sorry when they push or shove past you in the street.
 In fact, they rarely do.
 However, that doesn't mean you can't give them *the look*.
 Never give your older sister *the look*.
 Your sister, best friends and family know more about you than your own self.
 So listen to them when it counts.
 Listen to teachers.
 At least, *pretend* to listen to teachers.
 Teachers are *not* your friends.
 Neither are nuts, sesame seeds, cats, dogs, trees, grass, mould or dust mites.
 Or tomatoes, for that matter.

Heather Towle

NOTTINGHAM ACADEMY, RANSOM ROAD

A Waterfall Fell from Her Face

I was just at work sitting at a till at Costa
 Surprisingly, there was only one couple in the shop
 At least I was being paid when there're no costumers
 I watched.
 It was like a documentary by David Attenborough
 My parents told me never to stare at people because it's rude
 It is,
 But.
 It's fascinating.
 The middle-aged couple started shouting words of filth at each other
 What was going on?
 What did I miss?
 The man roared at the lady
 She shouted back but compared to him it was only a little meow.
 The lady broke down in tears
 A waterfall fell from her face as the man marched off
 What could I do?
 I went up to her and said
 'Miss... whatever you want... it's on me '
 She just shouted
 'GO AWAY'
 Well... I tried
 I went back to the till
 'May I take your order, sir?'

Hyder Al Dani

PIMLICO ACADEMY

These Things I Know

What do I know, I hear you ask?

Well, I know almost everything that is of no use to you. I know things that you don't know and I know things that you shouldn't care to know about.

Ah. I hear you complain that my answer doesn't truly answer your question.

But the things I know are for me to know only as, if you knew them, then you'd know as much as me. And let's face it – *I should* know more than you.

Just tell you the things I know, I hear you cry!

Very well. I'll tell you this one thing that I know. This thing that I know is that I will never know the things that I truly know.

A Letter to Fear

Dear Fear,

Why do you continue to trouble me with your venomous mouth and your vile presence?

After all that has happened, I still notice your shadows dancing around, mocking me in spite and malice. Why do you hate me so? Fear in namesake and fear in personality. How I still remained oblivious to you, is beyond my answering.

The lights have often gone out which reels me into a bottomless pit of darkness. This is your own doing, I presume? It's because of you, all laughter has died on my lips. It's because of you, I haven't met either food or sleep. It's because of you, I dread living.

I beg of you to have the slightest sympathy to your sadistic behaviour and your everlasting rule of terror.

Yours sincerely,

Your latest victim.

Kamila Jusinska

APPLETON ACADEMY

Twilight of Consequence

And though the sky is unknowing of consequence,
Of time, space and dimension,
Under its twilight life learns,
It expands to lengths it thought were too far,
Widths it could not fathom.

And though there may be a lack of ground,
And no more steps should be made,
A warmth engulfs new life,
Reminding it of the small discoveries that made this world big.

When Death Comes

There are many things that I want to do,
Skydive, scuba dive, dive through the air on a bungee cord,
I want to see the world from a 30,000ft drop.
I want a flat with fuzzy carpets and a red-hot fireplace,
Where I will melt like a marshmallow on a yellow sofa,
when I have no energy.
I want a 'Hello' from Mrs Kray,
Who cusses at me ever since her cat crawled into my car and
ate the KitKats,
Then died.
I want to climb Everest,
eat prawns,
play drums in a spotlight,
draw a perfect portrait,
and paint the sky on my bedroom ceiling,
to watch the sky at night when the curtains are closed.

I want to do all that and more,
And when Death comes for me,
I want to walk into its open arms,
Ready, proud and wholehearted,
Because I want to have done it all.

These Things I Know

In the beginning, there is you. A singularity.
 Then life comes in and throws people at you,
 Your parents teach,
 Your teachers preach,
 Your preachers are politicians,
 Politicians are liars,
 But you only learn that when it's too late,
 You laugh, cry, get frustrated, angry, upset,
 You live.
 You have a family.
 You create,
 Then you get old.
 And in the end there is still you. Still a singularity.

Future

The things they say are just malicious,
 Because while they tell you to be 'ambitious',
 They mean 'rational and logical',
 And when you live in a poor estate,
 They say it's better to work at a small market stall,
 Instead of saying 'listen to your heart',
 'Cos in this life you've got to 'fight',
 So you could be living a luxurious life as a lawyer,
 In the city you live in you will be Mayor,
 And the Earth will be yours my friend,
 When your parents' primary socialisation will come to an end,
 When you open your eyes, like I did,
 To the cracks in your child-home walls,
 The foodless shelves, the bottles they hid,
 Stale stench of cigarettes that punch through your heart,
 Huge holes.
 And you know they lied when they said 'little is enough',
 That you've got to be happy with what you've got
 because 'life is tough'.

Odhran Dutch

BANOVALUM SCHOOL

When Death Comes

We all think that we only live for when our heart starts to beat but that is not true. That is the delusion we see and it is so comfortable to think of this delusion that we are unable to draw out what is real and what we think. We do not start our lives with a thump in our chest. We do not start living when we take our first breath. We start... with a flat line. We all start with Death. He has given me life for that is a fact and When Death Comes, I will tell the stories *I have*, I will show him the memories *I have*, I will show him the life I had. My stories, my memories, my WHOLE LIFE captured into one snapshot which will be stuck upon the night sky with constellations speaking of my birth. When Death Comes, I will map out my life upon a storyboard which shall be used as gospels. Angels would hear of my deeds and cheer for me. They will sing their songs and whoop and obsess over what I had done in my time. When Death Comes, I will hand over my life in a book and say '*Read*'.

His Eyes, His Eyes, His Eyes

His eyes, His eyes, His eyes
 If he said he was happy it would be a lie
 I saw all of his past just from one look
 It would be true if I said it was like reading a book

His eyes, His eyes, His eyes
 I saw everything he sees but I do not know why
 He is in pain, tortured and unbelievably sad
 We underestimate all the bad memories he's had

His eyes, His eyes, His eyes
 He was in pain for so long that he forgot how to cry

Run Away to Heaven with Me

Run away to Heaven with me.
 I don't want to leave you all on your own,
 But God has given me life as a loan
 He's expecting me back
 There is no time for me to pack

Run away to Heaven with me.
 I cannot promise you that it won't hurt
 Watching your friends cry over a patch of dirt
 I cannot promise you that you won't feel pain
 Staring at two bodies lying in the rain

Run away to Heaven with me.
 We could be happy, joyful and free
 We would open our caged hearts, we would find the key
 It would be peaceful, beautiful and blissful
 There would be no more weight for us to pull

Listen to me
 I was wrong to speak and foolish to act
 For something is wrong and that is a fact
 God was a lie and the Angels were too
 Heaven has changed and there's nothing anyone can do
 Run away from Heaven for me.

Reem Salha

BURLINGTON DANES ACADEMY

Affection

'Light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul.'

– Lolita, Vladimir Nabokov.

There the lovers lay,
 not one word, gradually
 her devotion grew.

After a few silences, laughter rose
 and subtly, he observed her,
 almost obsessively,
 admiring the wrinkles
 that blossomed
 by her vulnerable eyes.

Though he was aware
 their fingers were intertwined
 with each other,
 it almost seemed
 as though he was wishing,
 hoping she would
 reappear, as though she fled
 and what he held
 in his arms was not
 who he believed
 he adored.

One believed
they had everything
they desired,
yet the other
needed more.

Sanaa Jabari

WEMBLEY HIGH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Autumn Leaves

When death comes,
it comes through a wet mess of sweat and tears
as a gun presses hard against your temple,
or a noose lies limp around your neck,
seconds away from being pulled.
It comes from the tragedy of being stabbed through the heart
with a blade as short as the life you lived,
or it comes from the pain of sitting alone
in your nursing home in the middle of the night
with your parents and your lover on your mind
as they've already left your life, but
you know when they died, you died then too
and a second death is nothing compared to the first.

When death comes,
the world would be immersed in autumn leaves,
and every last one would gently fall
floating through the air, as one drifts through life
until it's finally caressed by the hundreds of other souls
who came before, and you finally understand
You are never really alone.

Chaos

I will put chaos into 14 lines.
 I'll start with love and heartbreak,
 as the heart turns loss into the tempest of the mind.
 Then there is insanity,
 as your own words and thoughts morph into your enemy.
 The most destructive of war,
 where innocent victims are lost to political games.
 The most silent is depression,
 where a person's smile could hide the most excruciating pain.
 But chaos comes in many forms,
 where a child's artwork splatters a page
 and ideas of a writer splatters a page.
 Though destructive and messy, I think you'll find
 Chaos is an escape for the mind.

Puzzle Pieces

If you ask my brother,
 he would tell you I don't know anything useful.
 I can't cook an egg and would probably starve
 if left alone for too long.
 I have enough book smarts to know that
 gorillas have funerals and Hitler had a dog named Blondie
 but I don't have enough common sense to know
 not to do the same stupid thing twice.

If you ask my friends, they would tell you
 I'm street-smart.
 I don't drive, but I know exactly where
 every speed camera is on the way to my friends' houses.
 I may not get 'A's in every subject,
 but I have more common sense to know
 the ones that I love are the ones that matter.

If you ask the boys at my school, they would tell you
 I'm not girlfriend material.
 I'm the type you invite to your house
 and not to your future.
 If you ask my boyfriend,
 I am romantic.
 Chivalry is not dead and yes, I cried at *The Notebook*.

If you're missing pieces of a puzzle,
 you can never get the full picture.
 You can never know whether the item
 held in a man's hand was a knife or a rose

as it was replaced by the worn-out wood of your dining room table.

But if you were to ask me,
as you should have at the beginning,
you should know that the only thing I do know
is that nobody really knows me at all.

Shouq Shileba

ST AUGUSTINE'S CE HIGH SCHOOL

You & I

*Let us go then you and I,
fit your warm gentle hands into mine,
as if we are fixing a broken vase.
Our hearts collide into one – sparks fly:
as time flew by it became more than fine.
Each word a diamond –
though we only spoke once or twice,
I can't erase you from my mind,
as if you were engraved into my thoughts.
Every time my eyes meet yours
I feel I've been risen up to the sunrise.
So why not?
Let us go then you and I,
let us go together into the sunrise.*

Let It All Go Away

If only I can stitch up my deadly lips together,
 If only I can eat up my scrumptious words again,
 If only what was told can be untold,

Suck back the blood tears of mine in their shelter eyes,
 Suck back the sadness of mine back into my broken heart,
 Suck what has been told back into my heavy mind,

My words being flown around people's ears,
 My words being brushed off people's hair,
 My words being vacuumed into people's mouths,
 My words being wrapped around my innocent neck becoming
 tighter and tighter, making it harder and harder to breathe,
 making my warm deadly mouth...

Time flew by,

People stopped inhaling them,
 People stopped brushing them against each other,
 People stopped flying them around,
 They became looser and looser around my hurtful neck, my ice
 cold lips began to melt away and begin to be the cherry
 colour of them,
 Instead these words started haunting her, started killing her,

Wanting to remove all this pain I sucked them all away from:
 Her mouth,
 From her ears,
 From her mind.

Just a Flower

Although it was 'just a flower' my friends would chuckle about,
 I did not see it like that. It was more than that. It was something
 I could cherish forever given by someone who actually cares for
 me. My small heart was thumping fast, my hidden smile couldn't
 be any wider and my panther laughter couldn't be more cheerful.
 My Starbucks Colombian Blue Mountain double shot latte eyes
 were glistening with a WAAAA! of joy. Placing my favourite
 flower so delicately inside my favourite book while recalling the
 moment he was like, 'this is you'. This is me, the baby blue
 cornflower that has made a home in the middle of this juggle.
 Not, 'this is for you!'

I Call It Love

What is it? I question myself every night.
 How do I know it is true?
 I question myself when I speak to guys.
 Will I ever find it?

Love is plain damn stupid.
 All it does is hurt, cause anger, tears, heartbreak, terror,
 everything any human should not feel.
 Yet, I say love causes warmth, smiles, laughter, freedom,
 everything any human should feel.
 Whether you are gay or straight or bi
 love finds its way, to you and I.

And when love finds you and I it says:

Here is a bear's warmth, here is a mother's comfort,
 here is fiery anger, here is blood and tears,
 here is a wide smile, here is cheerful laughter,
 here are dreadful downs,
 here are uprising ups.

Here is Love.

Yet, what is love to you?

Wafaa Farhat

KING SOLOMAN ACADEMY

Anxiety

A wave bigger than I have anticipated engulfs me.

I hold my breath,

refusing to let it in, to tamper with the beating of my heart and
 the functioning of my lungs. But one can only hold on for so long
 before getting weak

and letting go.

And so it washes all over me, inside me. My nose burns and my
 throat convulses but this time I've learnt how to swim

so I emerge,

alive.

Anticipating the next wave.

The Unwanted Visitor

Death stayed over at my house one spring.
Unexpected. Unannounced.
While life camped outside birthing and creating
Death was in my kitchen using up the last of my milk and
 leaving his shoes on the doorway floor.
He stayed for a long time too,
a year or so.
And even when he left,
 he didn't fully leave,
because every now and then
I find myself at the window,
peeking out,
waiting
for the next time
Death decides
to pay a visit.

Green Group Six-Word Autobiographies

Heather Towle – BVB, MCR, FOB, emo, that's me!

Odhran Dutch – Minds like large planets. I'm Jupiter.

Fatima Khan – I always make the right mistake.

Shouq Shileba – Noisy, yes! Yet crazy and magnificent!

Sanaa Jabari – You don't know who I am.

Kamila Jusinka – SMILE. You are in my presence.

Reem Salha – Too modest for my own good!

Hyder Al Dani – Lack of pancakes. Improved writing. Crazy!

Georgia Mae Caine – I am small but write big.

Alaa Musa – Know how amazing I really am.

Wafaa Farhat – I'm too epic for six words.

Arlo Brown – It is definitely not premature enlightenment.

Rebecca Goldsmith – Music moves me. Words conquer me.

Alan Buckley – Writing starts with an open heart.

Blue Group

Alexandria Robson

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY SAMWORTH ACADEMY

My Remembrance Day

The broken-hearted, no matter who they were, mourned your loss but you never came back.

Your friends cried over and over; no matter how much we cried, you never came back.

Now you're up where the angels belong, watching down on us all, but you'll never come back.

Sitting and talking isn't the same any more because you'll never come back.

It's mysterious, the way life can move on without you here with us.

It's scary to think death is inevitable, but for you it came early.

It's upsetting to understand and think that you didn't see a different way out for yourself.

And it's astounding how I saw you in comparison to how you saw yourself.

Every day I wake up hoping it's just a lie that's been over exaggerated.

Every day I hope I see you walking your beautiful dog on the path where we used to go.

Every day I just want to see your smile lighting up any day of the week.

My Remembrance Day is for you to show that even in death, you're loved.

My Remembrance Day is to show how you'll never be forgotten.

My Remembrance Day is to show everyone else how beautiful and brilliant you were.

My Remembrance Day is April 14th, so we'll remember forever.

Amalyah Byrd

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY SAMWORTH ACADEMY

Burning Threats

Beauty
 Something that stings, but could cure or kill you
 Repels through my indecisive brain
 Feeling as though the needles are my inner beauty
 It's there to fade away the burning threats
 But it finds a way to merge within
 My unsettled world, waiting to make me feel like an unstable
 horn

The expansion of my heart draws to a close
 The richest fears that run down my spine generate into
 desperation
 The name Worthlessness sits there and gets stored like a
 document
 Waiting to be opened and read.

Natural Disaster

The sky darkens in seconds, the trees bend over like an old
 man's back
 The darkness draws near with a sound of excellence

I can only hear my voice...

The escaping tropical threats that move around like a system
 The deadly flies dance around, like they're looking for services
 Available empty secret buildings
 Waiting to be discovered
 The unsanitary river, with a slow pace, that applauds with
 tiny explosions
 The trees are crooked and criss-crossed and layed out like
 a jigsaw
 The gazing mud that soaks up the atmosphere and spits it out
 through the unregulated flowers, this is just a Naturist's
 religion

Child

Questions

Without any answers

I found out on a message

Thinking...

What colour eyes does she have?

Is she the truth?

Is she going to become a issue?

I thought I would be the only child for a while

Does her skin feel as soft as mine?

Is she going to be my sleepless nights?

Or my falling tears?

Just remember I thought I was going to be the only child for
a while

Does she think she's going to be the only child?

Being the only child is like a lion getting his prey

I get everything

I even get that last smile before bed

I get that warming smell of pancakes

I even get an ironed shirt

Little things count

But that's only because I thought I was going to be the only
child for a while

Little did I know when I had sleepless nights because of mum I
didn't know you were evolving mum said don't worry it was
a bad curry.

But no!

It was the start of not being the only child

The responsibility rate started to increase

The whole globe could hear my un-edged heartbeat

Churning away.

Brendon Watson

LANCASTER SCHOOL

Anxiety

Dear Anxiety,

I know that I've been writing to you a lot recently, but I can't help it. You are the only thing I have, the only thing I can feel. I sit here, worrying about what happens next, although... nothing happens next. It never does. It's just the thought of the unknown to if it ever will. And that's why I came to you... Anxiety, the one thing that understands and is how I feel. No one else can talk to me about it because they're not in my mind, but you... you are and always will be.

Yours sincerely,
the face of fear

A Traveller from an Antique Land

I met a traveller from an antique land. His fashion and style was almost black and white like one in a photo shoot in the 1920's. His suit was finely tailored and his shoes were impeccably shined. He did not belong around here. He was out of place. Nothing around him complimented his classy and upper-tier look.

It was not only me that this man had caught the eye of. No. People passing by on the cobbles tended to stop for a quick second, standing there idly and in a trance. No one had seen anything like it, yet I and only I spoke to him... but he never spoke back.

Grace McKinlay

QUEENS PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Dying Backwards

He lies motionless in the smooth wooden casket. Death's door is glossy and sleek, adorned with white roses. It flings open as shovels retreat from the dirt, and muddy clumps spring off the blade and back into the cracked ground.

At the pillar, a woman draws her words back into the depths of her being. Salty tears climb up mourners' cheeks and settle in the ducts, forming a glassy sheen over their vision. They almost don't want to see.

An old man stumbles backwards in the aisles, his faltering smile of reassurance unzipped to nothing; too far gone to feel.

The service is tightly woven together, and unwinds faster than the priest can process his thoughts. They suck into a hard ball in his throat. Then the black funeral cars are vacuumed back towards their driveways, and the body is lying on a stretcher.

The black suit, finished with a rose, is unpeeled. He is more real, suddenly, in jeans and a worn T-shirt; and the bubbling horror and realisation on his family's faces goes flat.

There is an ambulance outside. It rattles to the hospital, tarmac flying the wrong way. Blank-faced nurses flip the body backwards onto disinfected sheets, and it lies, twitching, before the crowds of drowning people.

They know that he is lingering between being there, and not being at all. They also know that he won't be in that position for much longer; so they let go of their breath when his stays still.

And above them all, snowflakes drift into dust and settle in the clouds.

WiFi

It's an electronic shade of blue, like the eye of a robot. It is soundless and odourless – not really there at all, yet for some teenagers, WiFi is essential to life.

It's a fuel: a food source; a driving force that keeps them going.

WiFi is an addiction. One day, it means nothing to us. That nonsensical code is pointless and forgettable. The next day, we find the numbers etched into our brain, unmovable and irreplaceable.

Symptoms of WiFi addiction are easy to spot, yet difficult to get rid of.

Do your fingers itch for your phone's keyboard?

When sitting in class, does your mind wander in search of a witty Instagram caption?

Is this supposedly sacred code the first thing you enquire about when you go on holiday?

For many unfortunate souls, these are a harsh reality – and when you've discovered the symptoms, there is no going back. In fact, by then, you may have given part of your soul to the bottomless ocean of the Internet.

How do I avoid such a dangerous addiction, you ask? How do I protect my independence?

It's easy to bluff an excuse, but everyone knows that there is only one escape.

Put down your phone, shut your laptop screen and switch off your tablet while you still can. There is still a chance for you now: next time, you may not be so lucky.

Harry Knight

BANOVALLUM SCHOOL

Dear Depression

Dear Depression

I'm sorry to say this but I'm glad you are out of my life. I know it may hurt, but not like you hurt me day in, day out. No more waking up and telling me to be unhappy and making me feel like I want to jump off a bridge. I'm glad that I want to wake up and go and meet new people, not just sit at home with your tormenting voice in my head telling me that the world is against me. I am finally free from what has been holding me back, and it was you...

Juliette Graham

QUEENS PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Dear Goodbye

Dear Goodbye,

You're the sound of the casket closing over our time together. Memories buried; doomed to fade. I don't like the loneliness as I wrench my eyes from their receding form, heart tearing – still attached – and see that I am alone, my only companion the tear you set running. Clenched fists do not replace their hand. The wind's embrace is cold. I miss their warmth. I hate the hole you leave in me, the place their heart once called home. I shall fill it with tears. You leave me gasping – breathless. You leave me scared for a life without them. You leave me alone. And I hate you for it. For the weakness, the quivering lip, the shredded heart, their empty place, the wet pillow when no one can hear me.

Leah Smith

OXFORD SPIRES ACADEMY

Self Construction

She drew the blade backwards
 And observed as her wounds followed her actions.
 It absorbed the red substance;
 Skin stitched up and stole its place.
 Her eyes drank the streams of self-disgust and hurt.
 She breathed slowly – calmly.
 Hysteria became a smile.
 Her face radiated life and happiness.
 She was not cornered.
 She was not abused.
 She removed her scars.
 She did not self-destruct.

Mackenzie Silverstone

OXFORD SPIRES ACADEMY

A Hundred Years from Now

A hundred years from now, Phil will turn into a little girl's most precious necklace.

Phil, otherwise known as 'Daddy', will never meet his baby girl.

Phil is a soldier.

Proud to serve his country night and day even though he's missed his daughter's first through to seventh birthday; however Phil is going home to see the gleam in his daughter's eyes and the love represented in her smile on her seventh birthday.

But what neither of them knows is that he will not be returning.

He will not hold his daughter's hand or kiss his wife for the last time.

Phil will be shot down and with only a photo six and a half years old; the only time his daughter will ever meet him will be through her dainty, silver locket – given to her on her seventh birthday with the engraved message:

'I will always love you, dad x'

Flatline

The straight toneless line regenerated
 Being pulled to the top of the screen forming pointed hills
 My chest inflated, then deflated
 And my veins slurped up the blood as my eyelids were forced
 open
 The migraine is absorbed into my head as the sick pile
 containing pills and alcohol are grabbed by the tip of my
 tongue and shoved to the back of my throat
 I'm up now
 Back in the room with a single door that lies askew on one
 crooked hinge
 Crying,
 Shaking,
 Dying.

Thomas Sutton

LANCASTER SCHOOL

Diary of a Foetus

Diary Entry 1:

I am not yet born, oh hear me, it's hard being a foetus. I can never get any peace and quiet, it's always 'He's kicking' this or 'I can't wait' that, I've had enough, I'm moving out.

Diary Entry 2:

Bad news, I can't get out. I tried and tried, but to no avail.

Diary Entry 3:

Me and brother Larry are making plans to dig our way out. They'll never see us coming, we'll be all 'POW!' and 'BANG!' this plan is fool proof.

Diary Entry 4:

Well, I absorbed Larry.

Diary Entry 5:

Mum keeps crying about Larry and I'm done, tomorrow I'll...
Be right back diary, someone's knocking on the door

Chris Rhodes

ST AUGUSTINES'S CE HIGH SCHOOL, TEACHER

He Posted Her a Snake

He posted her a snake
Instructed not to bite her
But snakes are not to be trusted.
The fairy tales were right on so many things.

Legends speak of disguises,
Deceptions, and innocence lost.
And brown paper packages
Delivered to your door
Do not always mean
A gift.

The snake was smooth
and warm and strong
with the stamps still
on the floor,
the string limp by the
torn wrapping.

It was comfortable and it grew.
She fed it with mice and
Precious things and value
And it smiled less and less.

It wrapped around her
 making her feel safe.
 She slept in its coils
 As they stretched and beat,
 smooth and warm and
 strong in her house.

From the kitchen to the bedroom
 The serpent stretched
 Lazily
 Carelessly.
 In the bedroom the softness hardened
 Cautiously
 Slowly
 It tightened
 And squeezed.
 Breathless.
 Not all snakes bite.

Meredith

Meredith sounds like the whisper
 of a dry tongue in a dry mouth.

She smells of playdough, soft,
 for an adult game.

She tastes of clay and chemicals and
 rubber gloves and disinfectant.

She remembers the imprint of
 a mouth dragged across words and
 covering painted cracks.

She holds the secret which is smeared
 Clipped treasure wasted on teeth
 And glasses and hopeless
 Nights laughing hollow.

Meredith can be broken by jealous love
 And joyous sadness
 Of self.

But she is strong because the circle is within a square.
 A click traps within barcodes and corners.

And she is special because she is used.
 Done.

In a hundred years from now Meredith will be in a museum.
A handbag.
A bathroom.
A textbook.
A thousand heads and hearts and minds that think
“What?” and “Why so much, so strong, so long?”

But for now she must be someone new to be approved.

Blue Group Six-Word Autobiographies

Aden Stead – Some secrets go to the grave.

Alexandria Robson – Brave, interesting, funny, likes writing poetry.

Amalyah Byrd – Fun person. Great laugh. Amazing writer.

Brendon Watson – I’m tall, sociable and I listen.

Grace McKinlay – Reading helps you unlock your story.

Harry Knight – Early mornings are not my strength

Juliette Graham – Loves to write, hates to share.

Leah Smith – Being broken lets the light in.

Mackenzie Silverstone – We actually went to the jungle.

Thomas Sutton – You can’t beat this grot.

