



# **National Eisteddfod Academy**

## **English Solo Verse Speaking**

*Extracts from the Di Konokono Festival Syllabi  
2002 – 2003 & National Eisteddfod Academy  
Prospectus 2005*

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# Introduction

This selection was compiled from the Syllabus of the Di Konokone Festival as used by the National Eisteddfod Academy from 2000 – 2003, as well as the 2005 Prospectus of the National Eisteddfod Academy. The purpose of this extract is to provide teachers and learners without access to the necessary material, with some examples of poetry for choral verse speaking and solo verse speaking amidst the challenges of Covid-19 and the lockdown situation.

These poems can be used as examples of own choice poetry for learners to prepare themselves for participation in the National Eisteddfod of South Africa<sup>©</sup> 2020. This material is copyright protected and may only be used by educators and participants for this purpose.

The *Magic of the Arts* will surely uplift your spirit and provide you with joy and pleasure in these challenging times! Enjoy!

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CEO  
National Eisteddfod Academy  
3 April 2020

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# ENGLISH SOLO VERSE SPEAKING

## *Extracts from the Di Konokono Festival Syllabi 2002 – 2003 & National Eisteddfod Academy Prospectus 2005*

### PRE-SCHOOL/GRADE 0 : BOYS/GIRLS

#### **The Tickle Rhyme**

“Who’s that tickling my back?” said the wall.  
“Me,” said a small  
Caterpillar. “I’m learning  
To crawl.”  
*Ian Serrailier*

#### **My nose**

It doesn’t breathe;  
It doesn’t smell;  
It doesn’t feel  
So very well.

I am discouraged  
With my nose:  
The only thing it  
Does is blows.  
*Dorothy Aldis*  
*From: Everything and Anything*

#### **When I’m an astronaut**

When I’m myself,  
It’s “1, 2, 3,”  
I count  
As I’ve been taught.  
But in my  
Space suit—  
“3, 2, 1,”  
Says the astronaut.  
*Leland B. Jacobs*  
*The Instructor Publications, Inc*

Extract from: **NEA PROSPECTUS 2005**

### PRE-SCHOOL/GRADE 0 : BOYS / GIRLS

#### **The puzzled centipede**

A centipede was happy – quite!  
Until a toad in fun

Said, “Pray, which leg moves after which?”  
This raised her doubts to such a pitch,  
She fell exhausted in the ditch  
Not knowing how to run.

#### **When I’m an astronaut**

When I’m myself,  
It’s “1, 2, 3,”  
I count  
As I’ve been taught.  
But in my  
Space suit—  
“3, 2, 1,”  
Says the astronaut.  
*Leland B. Jacobs*  
*The Instructor Publications, Inc*

#### **Mix a pancake**

Mix a pancake,  
Stir a pancake,  
Pop it in the pan.  
Fry the pancake,  
Toss the pancake,  
Catch it if you can.  
*Christian Rossetti*

#### **My cat**

My cat is named Tiger  
Because he has stripes.  
When he’s mad he cries, “GRRRRR!”  
When he scratches I say, “Yipes!”  
*Mary Sierra Brodland*

#### **Today I saw a little worm**

Today I saw a little worm  
Wriggling on his belly.  
Perhaps he’d like to come inside  
And see what’s on the Telly.

## **Tiger**

I'm a tiger  
Striped with fur  
Don't come near  
Or I might Grrr  
Don't come near  
Or I might growl  
Don't come near  
Or I might  
BITE!  
*M. Hoberman*

## **THE SCORPION**

The Scorpion is as black as soot,  
He dearly loves to bite;  
He is a most unpleasant brute  
To find in bed at night.  
*Hilaire Belloc*

## **THE FLEA**

I'm itchy! I'm itchy!  
What can it be?  
Is it my hair?  
Or is it me?  
Or is it the flea  
Who has bitten my knee!  
*Joanne Hendle*

## **BAD MOOD DAY**

Keep away  
It's a bad mood day,  
I could make a noise,  
Break my toys.  
I could be very bad,  
Make mum sad.  
I could smash a mug  
Spill the milk jug  
It's a bad mood day.  
A bad bad day.  
*A. Earl*

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Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

## **GRADE 1 : BOYS/GIRLS**

### **Fuzzy wuzzy, creepy crawly**

Fuzzy wuzzy, creepy crawly  
Caterpillar funny,  
*You will be a butterfly*  
When the days are sunny.

Winging, flinging, dancing, springing

Butterfly so yellow,  
You were once a caterpillar,  
Wiggly, wiggly fellow.  
*Lilian Schulz*  
From: *Childcraft*

## **Little Black Bug**

Little black bug,  
Little black bug,  
Where have you been?  
I've been under the rug,  
Said little black bug.  
Bug-ug-ug-ug.

Little green fly,  
Little green fly,  
Where have you been?  
I've been way up high,  
Said little green fly.  
Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Little old mouse,  
Little old mouse,  
Where have you been?  
I've been all through the house,  
Said little old mouse.  
*Squaek-eak-eak-eak-eak.*  
*Margaret Wise Brown* From: *Childcraft*

## **Dark**

In the dark, dark wood, there was a dark, dark house,  
And in that dark, dark house, there was a dark, dark room,  
And in that dark, dark room, there was a dark, dark shelf,  
And on that dark, dark shelf, there was a dark, dark box,  
And in that dark, dark box, there was a . . . GHOST!  
*Anon*  
*Brimax Books LTD, Newmarket, England*

Extract from: **"NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"**

## **GRADE 1 : BOYS / GIRLS**

### **COLOUR CODE**

[an extract from]

When she's crumpy,  
Wrong side of the bed,  
Our teacher wears red.

When she's dreamy,  
Too good to be true,  
Our teacher wears blue.

When she's at home,  
Singing at the sink,  
Our teacher wears frilly, silly,  
straight-from-the-skating-rink,  
Twinkly, crinkly, who-cares-what-  
people-think,  
PINK!!!  
*Clare Bevan*

## ELEPHANTS

Elephants

are'nt any more important  
than insects

but I'm on the side  
of elephants

unless one of them tries  
to crawl up my leg  
*John Newlove*

## MUD

Mud is very nice to feel  
All squishy-squash between the toes!  
I'd rather wade in wiggly mud  
Than smell a yellow rose.

Nobody else but the rosebush knows  
How nice mud feels  
Between the toes.  
*Polly Chase Boyden*

## BEING TALKED ABOUT

I hate it when old people say:  
"He gets taller every day!"  
I want to shout out, "Ow!"  
when they say. "Such a big boy now!"  
It really gets in my hair  
when they talk about me as if I wasn't  
there!  
*Gavin Ewart*

## REFLECTION

I look in the mirror  
And what do I see?  
I see a little girl  
Who is looking at me.

She smiles when I smile,  
And frowns – so do I;  
And sometimes she seems  
To be going to cry.

I see her each morning  
And at the end of the day.  
But oh, how I wish  
She would come out and play.  
*Penny Wise*

## DOWN TO EARTH

I climbed a tree,  
I got too high.  
My dad said I could  
Touch the sky.

But I fell down,  
And bumped my head.  
So I think I'll stick  
To the ground instead.  
*Tony Bradman*

---

Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

## GRADE 2 : BOYS/GIRLS

### *The Price of Debauchery*

My mother said, "There are no joys  
In ever kissing silly boys.  
Just one small *kiss* and one small squeeze  
Can land you with some foul disease."

"But Mum, d'you mean from just a kiss?"

"You know quite well my meaning, miss."

Last week when coming home from school  
I clean forgot Mum's golden rule.  
I let Tom Young, that handsome louse,  
Steal one small kiss behind my house.

Oh, woe is me! I've paid the price!  
I should have listened to advice.  
My mum was right one hundredfold!  
I've caught Tom's horrid running cold!  
*Roald Dahl*

### *Dinosaur*

Who's that knocking  
at my door?  
Can it be  
a dinosaur?

Dinosaurs  
are huge and grand  
leaving footprints  
on the land

As big as anything  
can be.  
I hope he isn't  
after me!

I hope he isn't  
looking out  
for juicy children  
left about . . .

Or nosing round  
to find a treat  
of something extra  
nice to eat.

I hope he hasn't  
come to stay.  
Dinosaur!  
Please go away!  
*Jean Kenward*

### **Boys and Girls come out to play!**

Boys and girls come out to play,  
The moon does shine as bright as day.  
Leave your supper and leave your sleep,  
And join your friends out in the street.  
Come with a whoop and come with a call,  
Come with good will or not at all.  
Up the ladder and down the wall,  
A half-penny loaf will serve us all;  
You find milk and I'll find flour,  
And we'll have a pudding in half-an-hour.  
*Anon*  
*Publisher: Brown Watson, England*

Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

### **GRADE 2 : BOYS / GIRLS**

#### **Until I saw the sea**

Until I saw the sea  
I did not know  
that wind  
could wrinkle water so.

I never knew  
that sun  
could splinter a whole sea of blue.

Nor  
did I know before,  
a sea breathes in and out  
upon a shore.

### **Cats**

Cats sleep,  
Anywhere,  
Any table,  
Any chair,  
Top of piano,  
Window-ledge,  
In the middle,  
On the edge,  
Open drawer,  
Empty shoe,  
Anybody's  
Lap will do,  
Fitted in a  
Cardboard box,  
In the cupboard  
With your frocks  
Anywhere!  
They don't care!  
Cats sleep  
Anywhere.  
*Eleanor Farjeon*

### **WHEN THERE'S A FIRE IN THE JUNGLE**

When there's a fire in the jungle,  
They call the Elephant Brigade,  
Who race with their trunks full of water,  
To the place that has to be sprayed.  
But if the fire is a big one,  
It happens as often as not,  
That the elephants drink all the water,  
To stop themselves getting too hot.  
*Martin Honeysett*

### **MY NAME IS.....**

My name is Sluggery-wuggery  
My name is Worms-for-tea  
My name is Swallow-the-table-leg  
My name is Drink-the-Sea.

My name is I-eat-saucepans  
My name is I-like-snails  
My name is Grand-piano-George  
My name is I ride whales  
My name is Jump-the-chimmey  
My name is Bite-my-knee  
My name is Jiggery-pokery  
And Riddle-me-ree, and ME.  
*Pauline Clarke*

### **AT NIGHT**

There are things in the garden  
That aren't there by day.  
..... Witches and Dragons  
And Bears come to play.

They lurk in the bushes  
And stealthily creep  
All round the house,  
When they think I'm asleep!

There are things in the garden ....  
I hear them at night,  
And pull up the bedclothes,  
And shut my eyes tight...  
There are things in the garden  
That nobody sees.  
I KNOW that it's the Things....  
..... not the wind in the trees !

*Jenny Dunbar*

### **STICKY LICKY**

In the summer,  
When it's sunny  
Eating ice-cream  
Can be funny.

Ice-cream melts  
And drips so fast  
It's quite hard  
To make it last.

It's so lovely,  
Sweet and licky,  
But when it drips,  
You get sticky.

I get ice-cream  
On my clothes,  
In my hair  
And up my nose.

My dad says  
I should eat less;  
Ice-cream plus me  
Equals – mess!  
Tony Bradman

### **WHY?**

Superman can fly.  
Why can't I?  
Popeye can swim.

But I'm not him.  
Paddington's a bear –  
It's not fair!  
Why should all the people on TV  
Have so much more fun than me?

If you didn't know the answer,  
you'd want to cry.  
I do know the answer. They're not real.  
I am. That's why.

*Gyles Brandreth*

Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

### **GRADE 3 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### **Alice**

Alice hates her sister,  
She loathes with all her might,  
For sisters are such know-it-alls,  
Horrors full of spite.

Alice hates her sister,  
Her parents' darling child;  
The way they simper over her  
Drives poor Alice wild.

Alice hates her sister,  
At school it's just the same,  
Little sister hangs around  
And spoils big sister's games.

Alice hates her sister,  
She'd like to do her in;  
She's such a nasty piece of work  
It wouldn't be a sin.

Alice hates her sister . . .  
But wait – what's going on?  
Little sister's howling now,  
Something's very wrong.

Alice hates her sister,  
But she hates a bully more,  
Which is why she bashes Billy,  
And lays him on the floor.

Alice hates her sister,  
Though the moral's plain to see;  
Little sister might be foul –  
But still, she's family.

*Tony Bradman*

#### **Unfair**

They say I've got my father's nose  
They say I've got his walk  
And there's something about my grandad  
In the serious way I talk.

'And aren't his legs jus like our Jack's,  
Says smiling Auntie Rose  
'He could bend them just like that  
And touch his head with his toes.'

I've got Auntie Julia's funny laugh  
I've sister Betty's lips  
And just like Sid on my mother's side  
I'm fond of fish and chips.

I have moods that remind them of Auntie Vi  
And my hair's just like their Paul

Sometimes when I look in the mirror  
I wonder if I'm me at all.

But what I ask myself is this  
Why does it have to be  
That it's me who looks like them and not  
Them that looks like me.  
*Gareth Owen*

### ***The flattered flying-fish***

Said the shark to the flying-fish over the  
phone:  
"Will you join me tonight? I am dining alone.  
Let me order a nice little dinner for two!  
And come as you are in your shimmering blue."

Said the Flying-fish: "Fancy remembering me,  
And the dress that I wore at the Porpoises  
tea!"  
"How could I ever forget? Said the shark in  
his guile:  
"I expect you at eight!" and rang off with a  
smile.

She has powdered her nose, she has put on her  
things;  
She is off with a flap of her luminous wings.  
O, little one, lovely, light-hearted and vain,  
The moon will not shine on your beauty again!  
*E.V. Rieu*

Extract from: "**NEA PROSPECTUS 2005**"

### **GRADE 3 : BOYS / GIRLS**

#### **The owl and the astronaut**

The owl and the astronaut  
Sailed through space  
in their intergalactic ship  
They kempt hunger at bay  
With tree pills a day  
And drank through a protein drip.  
The owl dreamed of mince  
And slices of quince  
And remarked how life had gone flat;  
It may be all right  
To fly faster that light  
But I preferred the boat and the cat.  
*Gareth Owen*

#### **The chickens**

SAID the first little chicken  
With a queer little squirm,  
'I wish I could find  
A fat little worm.'

Said the next little chicken  
With an odd little shrug,  
'I wish I could find  
A fat little slug.'  
Said the third little chicken  
With a sharp little squeal  
'I wish I could find  
Some nice yellow meal.'

Said the fourth little chicken  
With a small sigh of grief,  
'I wish I could find  
A little green leaf.'

Said the fifth little chicken  
With a faint little moan,  
'I wish I could find  
A wee gravel stone.'

'Now, see here,' said the mother,  
From the green garden patch  
'If you want any breakfast,  
Just come here and scratch.'  
*Anon.*

#### **In the fashion**

A LION has a tail and a very fine tail,  
And so has an elephant, and so has a whale,  
And so has a crocodile, and so has a quail—  
They've all got tails but me.

If I had sixpence I would buy one;  
I'd say to the shopman, 'Let me try one';  
I'd say to the elephant, 'This is my one.'  
They'd all come round to see.

Then I'd say to the lion, 'Why, you've got a tail!  
And so has the elephant, and so has the whale!  
And, look! There's a crocodile! He's got a tail!  
You've all got tails like me!'  
*A.A. Milne*

#### **The frog school**

Twenty frogs come to the frog school.  
Twenty frogs, green as the green pool.  
The lesson must start.

To three naughty frogs arriving late,  
The teacher says, "I can't wait.  
So please take your places,  
And show me you faces  
Don't fidget, don't wriggle. Be good.

One little frog dreams of the sunshine,  
Of clouds, and the puddles in springtime.

Of insects that buzz around lilies ...  
"You must pay attention," snaps teacher.

Then, when the lessons and learning are done  
It's time for the frogs to have fun.  
They dive and they hop,  
They leap and they flop.  
The water's alive with their games.

### WHAT'S THAT?

What's that?  
Who's there?  
There's a great huge horrible horrible  
creeping up the stair!  
A huge big terrible terrible  
with creepy crawly hair!  
There's a ghastly grisly ghastly  
with seven slimy eyes!  
And flabby grabby tentacles  
of a gigantic size!  
He's crept into my room now,  
he's leaning over me.  
I wonder if he's thinking  
how delicious I will be.  
*Florence Parry Heide*

### GROWING

When I grow up I'll be so kind,  
Not yelling 'NOW' or 'Do you MIND!'  
Or making what is called a scene,  
Like 'So you're back', or 'Where've been?'  
Or 'Goodness, child, what is it NOW?'  
Or saying, 'STOP ...that awful row.'  
Or 'there's a time and place to eat'  
And 'Wipe your nose', or 'Wipe your feet!'

I'll just let people go their way  
And have an extra hour for play.  
No angry shouting, 'Now what's wrong?'  
It's just that growing takes so long.  
*Max Fatchen*

### LATE

I don't like watches,  
I don't like clocks,  
I don't like struggling  
to pull on my socks.

I'm the one they wait for,  
they always have to wait,  
because, for anything at all,  
I'm always, always LATE!  
I spend my life in rushing,  
I never can catch up -  
I'd win a Prize of Lateness,

I'd win a Challenge Cup.

I don't like whistles,  
Buzzers, bells or chimes  
I've been late for everything  
about a thousand times!

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Extract from: "**DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002**"

### GRADE 4 : BOYS/GIRLS

#### *Dumb Insolence*

I'm big for ten years old  
Maybe that's why they get at me

Teachers, parents, cops  
Always getting at me

When they get at me

I don't hit em  
They can do you for that

I don't swear at em  
They can do you for that  
I stick my hands in my pockets  
And stare at them

And while I stare at them  
I think about sick

They call it dumb insolence

They don't like it  
But they can't do you for it  
*Adrian Mitchell*  
From: *Poetry for pleasure*  
*MacMillan*

#### *Funny the Way Different Cars Start*

Funny the way  
Different cars start.  
Some with a chunk and a jerk,  
Some with a cough and a puff of smoke  
Out of the back,  
Some with only a little click —  
with hardly any noise.

Funny the way  
Different cars run.  
Some rattle and bang,  
Some whirr,  
Some knock and knock.  
Some purr  
And hummmmmmm  
Smoothly on  
with hardly any noise.

*Dorothy Baruch*

### ***There was an old woman***

There was an old woman of Chester-le-Street  
Who chased a policeman all over his beat.

She shattered his helmet and tattered his clothes  
And knocked his new spectacles clean off his nose.

"I'm afraid," said the Judge, "I must make it quite  
clear  
You can't get away with that sort of thing here."

"I can and I will," the old woman she said,  
"And I don't give a fig for your water and bread.

"I don't give a hoot for your cold prison cell,  
And your bolts and your bars and your handcuffs as  
well.

"I've never been one to do just as I'm bid.  
You can put me in jail for a year!"  
So they did.  
*Charles Causley*

Extract from: "**NEA PROSPECTUS 2005**"

### **GRADE 4 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### **Nutty nursery rhymes**

'Jump over the moon?' the cow declared,  
'With a dish and a spoon. Not me.  
I need a suit and a rocket ship  
And filmed by the BBC.

'I want a roomy capsule stall  
For when I blast away,  
And an astronaut as a dairymaid  
And a bale of meadow hay.'

She gave a twitch of her lazy rump,  
'Space travel takes up time.  
I certainly don't intent to jump  
For a mad old nursery rhyme.'  
*Max Fatchen*

#### **SULK**

I scuff  
my feet along  
And puff  
my lower lip  
I sip my milk  
in slurps  
And huff  
And frown  
And stamp around  
And tip my shal  
back from the table  
Nearly fall down  
but I don't care

I scuff  
And puff  
And frown  
And huff  
And stamp  
And pout  
Till I forget  
What it's about.  
*Felice Hofman*

#### **WITCHES**

Witches never wash themselves.  
They never comb their hair.  
They never clean their clothes at all  
Or change their underwear.  
Their skins are always spotty  
(Exactly as you'd guess).  
They're dirty and they're mucky,  
They always look a mess.  
They've lots of creepy crawlies,  
Like cockroaches and fleas,  
Which crawl about their bodies  
And do just as they please.  
That's why witches scratch and scratch,  
How horribly they itch –  
I'm really glad that I am me  
And not a warty witch!

#### **THE KING'S SPECTACLES**

The King has lost his spectacles!  
The court is in a flurry!  
They're searching here,  
They're searching there,  
It's such a hurry burry!

Where can they be?  
Where can they be?  
We'll search throughout the land,  
And he who find my spectacles,  
Shall have my daughter's hand.

Then, father dear,  
A boy is here:  
His home is in a shack.  
He often finds a needle  
In his master's big haystack.

Then bring him in!  
Yes, bring him in!  
We'll bring him in, sir, now ...  
My Lord, your noble spectacles  
Are on your noble brow!

We'll now proclaim through all the land,  
This boy shall have my daughter's hand.  
*James Gibson*

### **MOTHER DOESN'T WANT A DOG**

Mother doesn't want a dog.  
Mother says they smell,  
And never sit when you say sit,  
Or even when you yell.  
And when you come home late at night  
And there is ice and snow,  
You have to go back out because  
The dumb dog has to go.

Mother doesn't want a dog.  
Mother says they shed,  
And always let the strangers in  
And bark at friends instead,  
And do disgraceful things on rugs  
And track mud on the floor,  
And flop upon your bed at night  
And snore their doggy snore.  
Mother doesn't want a dog,  
She's making a mistake.  
Because, more than a dog, I think  
She will not want this snake.

*Judith Viorst*

### **ANYONE SEEN MY.....?**

The people who keep losing things  
Are searching high and low.  
They poke and peer- "We left it here."  
But no one seems to know.

The people who keep losing things  
Have not a single clue.  
The look in vain----- "It's lost, again.  
I can't just wear one shoe."  
For people who keep losing things  
There isn't any cure.  
They carry on--- "It can't be gone.  
I left it there, I'm sure."

They wear a look of great surprise  
To think that it's mislaid.  
A sock, a vest and all the rest  
Are stolen, lost or strayed.

The people who keep losing things---  
The worry and they whine.  
They can't think where ..... but, most unfair,  
They go and borrow mine.

*Max Fatchen*

### **GRADE 5 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### ***We Moved About a week Ago***

We moved about a week ago,  
it's nice here, I suppose,  
the trouble is, I miss my friends,  
like Beth, who bogged my nose,  
and Jess, who like to wrestle  
and dump me in the dirt,  
and Liz, who found a garter snake  
and put it down my shirt.

I miss my friend Fernando,  
he sometimes pulled my hair,  
I miss his sister Sarah,  
she shaved my teddy bear,  
I miss the Trumble triplets  
who dyed my sneakers blue,  
and Gus, who broke my glider,  
I guess I miss him too.

I really miss Melissa  
who chased me up a tree,  
I even miss "Gorilla" Brown  
who used to sit on me,  
the more I think about them,  
the more it makes me sad,  
I hope I make some friends here  
as great as those I had.

#### ***Witches***

Witches never wash themselves.  
They never comb their hair.  
They never clean their clothes at all  
Or change their underwear.  
Their skins are always spotty  
(Exactly as you'd guess).  
They're dirty and they're mucky,  
They always look a mess.  
They've lots of creepy crawlies,  
Like cockroaches and fleas,  
Which crawl about their bodies  
And do just as they please.  
That's why witches scratch and scratch,  
How horribly they itch —  
I'm really glad that I am me  
And not a warty witch!

#### ***Freddy frog***

A little frog upon a leaf  
Went sailing down the river  
His friends all playing on the bank  
Saw Freddy shake and shiver.

He knew the river's water fast  
Would take him to sea  
"Jump, jump!" they cried, "You silly frog!  
It's as easy as can be."

"I can't, I can't!" he cried with fear  
"I'm scared and I'm not clever."  
"You must you must!" they called again  
"Make haste! It's now or never!"

A handsome swan, quite fond of frogs  
Came gliding close to catch him;  
"A tasty morsel, I declare!"  
And stretched his neck to snatch him.

Freddy knew he had to jump  
"I will not be his dinner!"  
He flung himself into the air –  
His leap, it was a winner!

"I can, I can!" He laughed with glee  
And swam and swam delighted,  
Back to his friends on the bank  
All dancing and excited.  
*Author unknown*

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Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

## GRADE 5 : BOYS / GIRLS

### I lost my invisible puppy

I lost my invisible puppy  
when we were out walking today,  
she disappeared into the bushes  
and totally faded away.

My puppy is not too apparent,  
my puppy is paler than pale,  
she tends not to draw much attention,  
she wags an invisible tail.

She wears an invisible collar,  
her leash is invisible too,

I fear that she's vanished forever,  
she's totally hidden from view.

I'll miss her obscure little antics,  
her odd indiscernible tricks,  
she chased inconspicuous crickets,  
she fetched undetectable sticks.

My poor imperceptible puppy  
is probably still in the park,  
perhaps if I pay close attention,  
I'll hear here inaudible bark.

## THERE ARE BIG WAVES

There are big waves and little waves,  
Green waves and blue,  
Waves you can jump over,  
Waves you dive through,  
Waves that rise up  
Like a great water wall,  
Waves that swell softly  
And don't break at all,  
Waves that can whisper,  
Waves that can roar,  
And tiny waves that run at you  
Running on the shore.

*Eleanor Farjeon*

## QUESTIONS

Do trains get tired of running  
And woodworms tired of holes  
Do tunnels tire of darkness  
And stones of being so old?

Do shadows tire of sunshine  
And puddles tire of rain?  
And footballs tire of kicking  
Does Peter tire of Jane?

Does water tire of spilling  
And fires of being too hot  
And smells get tired of smelling  
And chickenpox – of spots?

I do not know the answers  
I'll ask them all one day . . .  
But I get tired of reading  
And I've done enough today.

*Peter Dixon*

## TRAVEL

The railroad track is miles away,  
And the day is loud with voices speaking,  
And there isn't a train goes by all day  
But I hear its whistle shrieking.

All night there isn't a train goes by,  
Though the night is still for sleep and  
dreaming,  
But I see its cinders red on the sky,  
And hear its engine steaming.

My heart is warm with the friends I make,  
And better friends I'll not be knowing,  
Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take,  
No matter where it's going.

*EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY*

## MY DOG

Have you seen a little dog anywhere about?  
A raggy dog, a shaggy dog,  
who's always looking out  
For some fresh mischief which he thinks  
he really ought to do,  
He's very likely at this minute  
biting someone's shoe.

If you see that little dog,  
his tail up in the air,  
A whirly tail, a curly tail,  
a dog who doesn't care  
For any other dog he meets,  
not even for himself,  
Then hide your mats, and put your meat  
upon the top-most shelf.

If you see that little dog, barking at the cars,  
A raggy dog, a shaggy dog,  
with eyes like twinkling stars,  
Just let me know, for though he's bad  
as bad as bad can be,  
I wouldn't change that dog for all  
the treasures of the sea.

*Emily Lewis*

## FROM: MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

I will not throw the cat out the window  
Or put a frog in my sister's bed  
I will not tie my brother's shoelaces together  
Nor jump from the roof of Dad's shed  
I shall remember my aunt's next birthday  
And tidy my room once a week  
I'll not moan a Mum's cooking (Ugh! Fish fingers  
again!)  
Nor give her any more of my cheek.  
I will not pick my nose if I can help it  
I shall fold up my clothes, comb my hair,  
I will say please and thank you (even if I don't  
mean it)  
And never spit or shout or even swear.  
I shall start again, turn over a new leaf,  
leave my old bad ways forever  
shall I start them this year, or next year  
shall I sometime, or .... ?

*Robert Fisher*

Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

## GRADE 6: BOYS/GIRLS

### ***Never trust dragons***

'I see you've arrived,' the dragon said,  
bright eyes like beacons set his head.

'Yes,' said the vet. 'Left as soon as I knew.  
Now tell me the problem, a touch of the 'flu?'

'My flame has gone out, I can't raise a spark,  
not much use when you hunt in the dark.'

The vet peered down the gigantic throat,  
black as a chimney and reeking of soot.

He threw in some petrol, a match to ignite,  
firelighters, coal, and some dynamite.

The dragon covered a burp with is paw,  
a flicker of flame flashed down his jaw.

He licked his lips with a golden tongue:  
'Take your fee, vet, you'd better run.

I can feel my fires boil, they are returning.  
In a couple of minutes you could be burning.'

Clutching a diamond the size of a star,  
the vet scampered away to his car.

As he drove off the dragon's bright fires  
gushed out of the cave and scorched his tyres.

The vet snapped his fingers, laughed at the brute  
because he was wearing his flame-proof suit.  
*David Harmer*

### ***A little mistake***

I studied my tables over and over, and backwards  
and forwards too;  
But I couldn't remember six times nine, and I  
didn't know what to do,  
Till my sister told me to play with my doll, and not to  
Bother my head.  
'If you call her 'fifty four' for a while, you'll learn it  
by heart,' she said.

So I took my favourite Mary Ann (though I thought  
'twas a  
dreadful shame  
To give such a perfectly lovely child such a perfectly  
horrid name),  
And I called her "My dear little fifty four" a hundred  
times, till I knew  
The answer of six times nine as well as the answer  
of two  
times two.

Next day, Elizabeth Wrigglesworth, who always  
acts so

proud,  
Said "Six times nine is fifty two," and I nearly  
laughed  
aloud!

But I wished I hadn't when teacher said, "Now,  
Dorothy,  
tell if you can."

For I thought of my doll, and – oh dear, oh dear! I  
answered "Mary-Ann"!

*A.M. Platt, CURRY, J. 1981*

### **Our teacher**

Our teacher taps his toes,  
keeping the beat to some silent tune,  
only he knows.

Our teacher drums his fingers,  
on his desk, on the window,  
on anything, when the room is quiet,  
when we're meant to be writing,  
in silence.

Our teacher cracks his knuckles,  
clicks his fingers, grinds his teeth,  
his knees are knocking the edge of his desk,  
he breathes to a rhythmical beat.

When he turns his head in a certain way,  
there's a bone that cracks in his neck.  
When he sinks to the floor,  
we often think, he'll stay on his knees  
forever more, he's such a physical wreck!

Our teacher bangs his head against the wall  
(or pretends to) when Wendy comes up  
with another dumb remark.

Our teacher says we annoy him  
with all our silly fuss.  
Perhaps he's never really thought  
how much he irritates us.

*Brian Moses*  
*Cadbury's Children's Poetry, 1986:19*

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Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

### **GRADE 6 : BOYS / GIRLS**

#### **WILL YOU?**

Will you be my Valentine?  
Will you marry me in June?  
Will you lock me in the basement  
when there is a bright, full moon?

Will you bring me lots of roses?  
Will you bring me chocolate sweets?  
Once a month when I get hairy,  
Will you feed me doggy treats?

Will you treat me with devotion?  
Will you bless me when I sneeze?  
Will you dust my back with powder  
just in case I've gotten fleas.

Will you be my darling angel?  
Will you be my dream divine?  
That's exactly what the Wolfman  
said to Lady Frankenstein.

**ADVICE TO GROWN UPS AND OTHER  
ANIMALS.....**

(Written on a frog by Eric who ate too  
many worms and died.)

Be very careful  
When you're swimming in the sink,  
Cos the currents round the plughole,  
Are stronger than you think.

Be very, very careful  
When you're eating hot barbed wire,  
If you gobble, it will prick you,  
And you'll suddenly expire.  
Be very, very careful  
When singing in the rain,  
Cos quicker than you think, your clothes will shrink  
And you won't get them off again.

Always be very careful  
When washing up the pots,  
Cos the water makes your fingers soft  
And ties them into knots

And be very, very careful  
While swimming through the park,  
By the bowls shed and the putting green  
There lurks the Dry-Land Shark.

And be very, very careful  
While a reading of this book,  
For there's something stood behind you  
And over your shoulder it looks.....  
*Mike Harding*

#### **PET SHOPPING**

While shopping at the pet store  
I got my fondest wish.  
I bought myself a fish bowl  
and then a pair of fish.

And since I was already  
out shopping at the store  
I thought I ought to purchase  
another smidgen more.

And so I got a rabbit,  
a hamster and a frog,  
a gerbil and a turtle,  
a parrot and a dog.

I purchased an iguana,  
a tortoise and a rat,  
an eight-foot anaconda,  
a monkey and a cat.

A guinea pig, a gecko,  
a ferret and a mouse,  
and had them all delivered,  
directly to my house.

My sister went berzerko!  
She's now installing locks,  
because I said her bedroom  
would be their litter box!

*Kenn Nesbitt*

### **MOSQUITOES, MOSQUITOES!**

Mosquitoes, mosquitoes,  
stop torturing me,  
why can't you behave  
more considerately,  
you've bitten me practically  
down to the bone,

please leave me alone!  
Mosquitoes, mosquitoes,  
you're hard to ignore,  
I itch and I scratch,  
I can't stand anymore,  
you've bitten my bottom,  
you've bitten my top,  
mosquitoes, mosquitoes,  
I'm begging you, stop!

Mosquitoes, mosquitoes,  
I honestly feel  
it's time that you went  
somewhere else for a meal,  
you've bitten me places  
I can't even see,  
mosquitoes, mosquitoes,  
stop torturing me!

### **NOISE**

I like noise.  
The whoop of a boy, the thud of a hoof,  
The rattle of rain on a galvanized roof,  
The hubbub of traffic, the roar of a train,  
The throb of machinery numbing the brain,  
The rush of the wind, a door on the slam,  
The switching of wires in an overhead tram,  
The boom of the thunder, the crash of the waves,  
The din of a river that races and raves,  
The crack of a rifle, the clank of a pail,  
The strident tattoo of a swift-slapping sail –  
Arises a gamut of soul-stirring joys.

I like noise.

*Jessie Pope*

### **FRIENDS**

I fear it's very wrong of me,  
And yet I must admit,  
When someone offers friendship  
I want the whole of it.  
I don't want everybody else  
To share my friends with me.  
At least, I want one special one,  
Who, indisputably,

Likes me more than all the rest,  
Who's always on my side,  
Who never cares what others say,  
Who lets me come and hide.  
Within her shadow, in her house –  
It doesn't matter where –  
Who lets me simply be myself,  
Who's always, always there.

*- Elizabeth Jennings*

### **COLD FEET**

They have all gone across  
They are all turning to see  
They are all shouting 'Come on'  
They are all waiting for me.

I look through the gaps in the footway  
And my heart shrivels with fear,  
For far below the river is flowing  
So quick and so cold and so clear.

And all that there is between it  
And me falling down there is this:  
A few wooden planks – not very thick –  
And between each, a little abyss.

The holes get right under my sandals.  
I can see straight through to the rocks  
And if I don't look, I can feel it,  
Just there, through my shoes and my socks.

Suppose my feet and my legs withered up  
And slipped through the slats like a rug?  
Suppose I suddenly went very thin  
Like the baby that slid down the plug?

I know that it cannot happen  
But suppose that it did, what then?  
Would they be able to find me  
And take me back home again?

They have all gone across  
They are all waiting to see  
They are all shouting 'Come on' –  
But they'll have to carry me

## GRADE 7 : BOYS/GIRLS

### **Mrs. Reece laughs**

Laughter, with us, is no great undertaking,  
A sudden wave that breaks and dies in breaking.  
Laughter, with Mrs. Reece, is much less simple:  
It germinates, it spreads, dimple by dimple.  
From small beginnings, things of easy girth,  
To formidable redundancies of mirth.  
Clusters of subterranean chuckles rise  
And presently the circles of her eyes  
Close into slits, and all the woman heaves  
As a great elm with all its mounds of leaves  
Wallows before the storm. From hidden sources  
A mustering of  
Blind volcanic forces  
Takes her and shakes her till she sobs and gapes.  
Then all that load of bottled mirth escapes  
In one wild crow, a lifting of huge hands,  
And creaking stays, and visage that expands  
In scarlet ridge and furrow. Thence collapse,  
A hanging head, a feeble hand that flaps  
An apron-end to stir and air and waft  
A steaming face. And Mrs. Reece has laughed.  
*Martin Armstrong*

### **Hugger mugger**

I'd sooner be  
Jumped and thumped and dumped  
  
I'd sooner be  
Slugged and mugged . . . than *hugged* . . .

And clobbered with a slobbering  
Kiss by Auntie Jean:

You know what I mean:

Whenever she comes to stay,  
You know you're bound

To get one.  
A quick  
    short  
    peck  
    would  
    be  
    O.K.

But this is a  
Whacking great  
Smacking great  
*Wet* one!

All whoosh and spit  
And crunch and squeeze  
And 'Dear little boy!'  
And 'Auntie's missed you!'

And 'Come to Auntie, she

Hasn't *kissed* you!  
Please don't do it, Auntie,  
PLEASE!

Or if you've absolutely  
Got to,

And nothing on *earth* can persuade you  
Not to,

The trick  
Is to make it  
*Quick*,

You know what I mean?

For as things are,  
I really would far,

Far sooner be  
Jumped and thumped and dumped,

I'd sooner be  
Slugged and mugged . . . than *hugged* . . .

And clobbered with a slobbering  
Kiss by my Auntie Jean!  
*Kit Wright*

### **Harry Hobgoblin's Superstore**

You want a gryhen's feather  
Or a spell to change the weather?  
A pixilating potion  
To help you fly an ocean  
Some special brew or magic  
To supercharge your broomstick?  
Witches, wizards, why not pop  
Into Harry's one-stop shop?

Tins of powdered dragon's teeth,  
Bottled beetles, newts.  
Freeze-dried cobwebs, cats and rats,  
Screaming mandrake roots.  
Lizard skins stirred widdershins,  
A giant's big toe nail,  
Second-hand spells used only once  
New ones that cannot fail.  
Spells to grow some donkey's ears  
On the teacher no one likes,  
Spells to make you good at sums,  
Spells to find lost bikes.

Spells that grow and stretch and shrink,  
Spells that make your best friend stink,  
Sacks of spells stacked on my shelves,  
Come on in, see for yourselves.  
Magical prices, tricks galore  
At Harry Hobgoblin's Superstore.  
*David Harmer*

**GRADE 7 : BOYS / GIRLS**

**The madness of a headmistress**

Don't be a fool, don't go to school  
Don't put a foot outside –  
Old Miss Oysterley  
Is eating bubblegum,  
Sellotape, tin-tacks and Tide!

Be like a mouse, stay in the house –  
Her mouth is open wide –  
Weird Miss Oysterley  
Is drinking printer's ink,  
Paint and insecticide!

Don't go near the Head, just stay in bed –  
Jump in a box and hide –  
Old Miss Oysterley  
Is fond of the little ones –  
Roasted or frittered or fried!

It's very sad, she's gone quite mad,  
Her brain is quite petrified –  
Poor Miss Oysterley  
Munching through Infants 1  
That once was her joy and pride!  
*Gavin Ewart*

**Ladles and jellypoons**

Ladles and jellypoons:  
I come before you  
To stand behind you  
And tell you something  
I know nothing about.

Next Thursday,  
The day after Friday,  
There'll be a ladies' meeting  
For men only.

Wear your best clothes  
If you haven't any,  
And if you can come  
Please stay home.

Admission is free,  
You can pay at the door.  
We'll give you a seat  
So you can sit on the floor.

It makes no difference  
Where you sit;  
The kid in the gallery  
is sure to spit.

**Beyond my house**

Above my house  
is the blue of the sky,  
fragile fishbone clouds  
and the wind whispering  
like an untold wish.

Below my house  
is the dark secret earth,  
deep-spiralling roots  
and the mystery of lives  
lived underground.

Around my house  
is the garden wall, where  
slow snails crawl and spiders  
hang their webs, beaded  
like door curtains.

Beside my house  
is an apple tree, a  
shady place to hide  
in summer, in winter  
a bony skeleton.

Over my house  
is a rainbow, a magic  
paint-splashed bridge  
where raindrops shine  
like crystal beads.

Inside my house  
is my family, my laughing,  
crying, quarrelling family,  
a place where I belong  
every single day.

Beyond my house  
is the future, full of promise  
as an unopened parcel  
wrapped in fancy paper  
and silver ribbons.  
*by Moin Andrew*

**THE SEA**

The sea is a hungry dog,  
Giant and grey.  
He rolls on the beach all day.  
With his clashing teeth and shaggy jaws.  
Hour upon hour he gnaws  
The rumbling, tumbling stones,  
And 'Bones, bones, bones!'  
The giant sea-dog moans,  
Licking his greasy paws.

And when the night wind roars  
And the moon rocks in the stormy cloud,  
He bounds to his feet and snuffs and sniffs,  
Shaking his wet sides over the cliffs,  
And howls and hollos long and loud.

But on quiet days in May or June,  
When even the grasses on the dune  
Play no more their reedy tune,  
With his head between his paws  
He lies on the sandy shores,  
So quiet, so quiet, he scarcely snores.  
*JAMES REEVES*

### **RICH MAN**

I saw a Rich Man walking down the street  
With a chain across his waistcoat and spats on  
his feet,  
With silver in his pockets that jingled as he walked,  
And a solid gold tooth that gleamed when he  
talked.  
He walked by the girls with their baskets on their  
knees  
Full of white clove pinks and pink sweet peas  
He walked y the flower girls whose baskets smelled  
like honey  
With his face full of care and his mind full of  
money.

I saw the Rich Man, he never saw me,  
So I see more than the Rich Man can see.  
*ELEANOR FARJEON*

### **CALLING A SPADE A SPADE**

That hairstyle doesn't suit you.  
I think your shirt looks cheap.  
Why do you wear those geeky shoes?  
You look like such a creep.

These cookies that your mother baked  
Taste just like sawdust pies.  
Your brand-new shades are really great!  
They hide your piggy-eyes.

With legs like yours you shouldn't wear  
A skirt as short as that.  
And you could cover your big ears  
If you wore a hat.

Oh, here's the book you lent to me:  
The one you said was cool.  
I read the first few pages –  
It bored me more than school.

I know your brother's very bright  
At least that's what I've heard.  
But I wish he'd stay away from me –  
My fiends think he's a nerd.

What's that, you say? I've made you mad?  
I've only said what's true!  
You're so unkind! I'll never again,  
Ever speak to you!  
*Penny Hansen*

Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

### **GRADE 8 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### **Smile**

She smiled at a sorrowful stranger.  
The smile seemed to make him feel better.  
He remembered past kindnesses of a friend  
and wrote him a thank-you letter.  
The friend was so pleased with the thank-you  
that he left a large tip after lunch.  
The waitress, surprised by the size of the tip,  
bet the whole thing on a hunch.  
The next day she picked up her winnings,  
and gave part to a man on the street.  
The man on the street was grateful;  
for two days he'd had nothing to eat.  
After he finished his dinner,  
he left for his small dingy room.  
(He didn't know at that moment  
that he might be facing his doom.)  
On the way he picked up a shivering puppy  
and took him home to get warm.  
The puppy was very grateful  
to be in out of the storm.  
That night the house caught on fire.  
The puppy barked the alarm.  
He barked 'til he woke the whole household  
and saved everybody from harm.  
One of the boys that he rescued  
grew up to be President.  
All this because of a simple smile  
that hadn't cost a cent.

*Barbara Hauck, From: Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul  
Publisher: Health Communications*

#### **The end of the world**

I was but nine years old  
When I caught the rumour that ran around  
From ear to ear in the school playground  
That someone's father or someone's friend  
Knew the hour when the world would end.  
Terror took hold  
As I heard it told.

All the way home and in bed  
I thought of the awful day that would come;  
The sick world shuddering like a drum,  
Then all on fire, and the cries and groans,

With the stars falling like huge hailstones,  
And the moon blood-red  
As the Bible said.

The day dawned and the sky  
Grew dire with a nor'west glare and gloom,  
I saw the signs and the arch of doom  
As tremblingly to school I trod  
To wait the hour of the wrath of God.  
But the day went by,  
And I did not die.

The world's end was not yet  
And I was glad, but would I have been  
If the child had seen what the man has seen?  
O when will this monstrous spinning top,  
Wheeled in its trancelike circuit, stop  
And the last sun set  
On its fume and fret?  
*Basil Dowling*

### **Teenagers**

Hey come on okes, it's time to have fun  
Forget the work and let our hormones run!  
"Boom boom boom boom, I want you in my room"  
Don't let my mother hear that, she'll freak out and swoon!  
Check out that babe, she's really quite cute  
Wow, with the body she's an absolute beaut.  
Our folks are quite strict, they're real fuddy duddies  
Why won't they let us hang out with our buddies?  
Let's hit the Mall and take in a movie  
How 'bout Nottinghill, Hugh Grant's quite groovy  
I'm feeling quite moody, look at this pimple  
When I wear my bikini can you see the dimple?  
I can't control the pitch of my voice  
My body is changing, I've got rid of my toys  
Sex-ed is cool! We know about HIV  
Mom and Dad, trust us and soon you'll see  
Our teenage years are only a stage  
We'll get through them, smiles, tears and rage  
Soon we'll be adults, ready to flee the nest  
Sit back, relax and enjoy our zest!  
*Sandy Sims*

Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

### **GRADE 8 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### **A history teacher's love song**

I love you like Mark Antony  
Adored his Cleopatra.  
I want us to spend breaktime in  
Ancient Eqyptian rapture.

I love you like Sir Launcelot  
Adored Queen Guinevere.  
Romance me like a noble knight  
When we get out of here.

I love you like Henry VIII  
Adored young Anne Boleyn.  
Please woo me with a Tudor rose  
When holidays begin.

I love you like Paris loved Helen  
Many years BC,  
Tell me you'd launch a thousand ships  
Just to be close to me.

I love you with the steady flame  
With which Queen Vic loved Albert.  
Come find a cosy staffroom chair –  
We'll snuggle up in comfort.

I love you like Edward VIII  
Adored his Mrs Simpson.  
Tell me you'd abdicate for me  
And make my cheeks burn crimson.

I love you like Charles number two  
Adored actress Nell Gwyn.  
Come and perform a play with me  
To drown the playground din.

And I love you like Nelson loved  
His Lady Hamilton.  
Come sail with me through history  
When all these kids have gone.  
*Julia Kawlinson*

### **The caged bird in springtime**

What can it be,  
This curious anxiety?  
It is as if I wanted  
To fly away from here.

But how absurd!  
I have never flown in my life,  
And I do not know  
What flying means, though I have heard,  
Of course, something about it.

Why do I peck the wires of this little cage?  
It is the only nest I have ever known.  
But I want to build my own,  
High in the secret branches of the air.

I cannot quite remember how  
It is done, but I know  
That what I want to do  
Cannot be done here.

I have all I need –  
Seed and water, air and light.  
Why then, do I weep with anguish,  
And beat my head and my wings  
Against those sharp wires, while the children  
Smile at each other, saying: "Hark how he sings"?  
*James Kirkup*

### **'Petronella'**

'Petronella darling don't play down there,  
Come and have tea with Auntie and me,  
It's nice and sunny here on the lawn  
And there's lots of strawberry jam.  
We'll even let you pick the currants  
And leave the rest of the scone.  
Petra, please, don't kick the cat.  
And do stop picking your nose.

Yes, she's even seven this year  
And so affectionate too.  
Don't throw stones at Mummy dear.

They might go in her eyes.

Auntie has brought you a present  
My love, come, kiss her and say  
Hullo – Petra! No, I think the little  
Dear said 'Oh! well.'

Petra don't dig up the dahlias  
And do give your knickers a tug.  
I don't like you playing down there  
My love, the goblins will catch  
You I'm sure – you'll kill them!  
Well, come and have tea with Auntie and me,  
And we'll let you drink out of the saucer.  
It's one of her off days you know.

Petronella! You've now gone too far,  
You've covered the table with sod,  
I know you don't care, but Auntie  
Is here, and she loves little girls like you.  
Leave the dahlias alone,  
No, we don't want a hole,  
And do stop screaming down there –  
Oh! dear, she's found Uncle George...'  
*Jeffrey Grinfell-Hill*

### **Declaration of intent**

She said she'd  
love me for eternity  
but managed to reduce  
it to eight months  
for good behaviour.  
She said we fitted  
like a hand in a glove  
but then the hot  
weather came and such  
accessories weren't needed.  
She said the future  
was ours but the deeds  
were made out in  
her name  
She said I was  
the only one who  
understood completely

and then she left me  
and said she knew  
that I'd understand completely.  
*Steve Turner*

### **SEA LULLABY**

The old moon is tarnished  
With smoke of the flood,  
The dead leaves are varnished  
With colour like blood,

A treacherous smiler  
With teeth white as milk,  
A savage beguiler  
In sheathings of silk,

The sea creeps to pillage,  
She leaps on her prey;  
A child of the village  
Was murdered today.

She came up to meet him  
In a smooth golden cloak,  
She choked him and beat him  
To death, for a joke.

Her bright locks were tangled,  
She shouted for joy,  
With one hand she strangled  
A strong little boy.

Now in silence she lingers  
Beside him all night  
To wash her long fingers  
In silvery light.  
*ELINOR WYLIE*

### **RIOT AREA**

They have burnt my hut.  
Not strangers, not Police,  
The people sent by Government to burn.  
They have not burnt my hut.  
It is my friends,  
For shall I not call them friends,  
That village next to ours?  
How cannot they be our friends?  
One stream gives water to us;  
We mourn with them their deaths;  
They cheer our weddings;  
Always it has been so.  
But they have burnt my hut.  
One brand into the thatch,  
Nothing is left on my roof,  
The falling timbers smashed my cups,  
Chairs and tables are burnt,  
A saved blanket covers me,  
Now they have burnt my hut.

J.H. CHAPLIN

### BEING A MAN

"Be a man," they say,  
"and don't cry."  
And I wonder why  
a man is not meant to show emotion.  
A man must wear a mask –  
And when I ask  
Why, he says, "Because I'm a man!"

But I think a man can  
Display feelings.  
I do – and more –  
I shout when I score!  
And when someone's a bore,  
I show it – for sure!

Slamming doors brings relief  
When I'm cross.  
When my sister annoys me  
I yell  
And I tell  
Her where to get off  
'Cos I'm the boss!

And I hope when I'm older,  
I'll continue to show  
Both joy and sorrow,  
Compassion and pain;  
And maybe – just maybe –  
When I am a man,  
I'll help make the world sane –  
With emotion.

*John Davies*

Extract from: "DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"

### GRADE 9 : BOYS/GIRLS

#### **Mama's Hands**

I saw you hide your hand in line,  
behind the lady fair,  
I noticed too, hers soft and white —  
immaculate from care.  
But Ma, I say, it's no disgrace  
to have workin' hands like you,  
and had she lived the life you have,  
she'd have hands just like it too.

But her hands have never hauled in wood,  
or worked in God's good earth.  
They've never felt the bitter cold,  
or chopped ice for waitin' stock,  
they've never doctored sick ones,  
or dressed a horse's hock.  
They've never pulled a hip-locked calf,  
or packed water to the barn.  
They've probably never patched blue jeans,  
or had worn ol' socks to darn.

They've never touched a young'n,  
or caressed a fevered head,  
with hands so gently folded,  
all night beside his bed.

They've never scrubbed a kitchen floor,  
or done dishes every day.  
They've never guided with those hands  
a child who's lost the way.

They've never made a Christmas gift,  
shaped by a lovin' hand.  
They've never peeled apples,  
nor vegetables they've canned.  
They've never worn a blister,  
or had calluses to show,  
for all they've done for others,  
and the kindnesses I know.

So you see, my dearest Mama —  
yours are hand of love.  
And I bet the Lord will notice  
when he greets you from above.  
*Tommi Jo Casteel, From: Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*  
*Publisher: Health Communications*

#### **Paint Brush**

I keep my paint brush with me  
Wherever I may go,  
In case I need to cover up  
So the real me doesn't show.  
I'm so afraid to show you me,  
Afraid of what you'll do — that  
You might laugh or say mean things.  
I'm afraid I might lose you.  
I'd like to remove all my paint coats  
To show you the real, true me,  
But I want you to try and understand,  
I need you to accept what you see.  
So if you'll be patient and close your eyes,  
I'll strip off all my coats real slow.  
Please understand how much it hurts  
To let the real me show.

Now my coats are all stripped off.  
I feel naked, bare and cold,  
And if you still love me with all that you see,  
You are my friend, pure and gold.

I need to save my paint brush, though,  
And hold it in my hand,  
I want to keep it handy  
In case somebody doesn't understand.  
So please protect me, my dear friend  
And thanks for loving me true,  
But please let me keep my paint brush with me  
Until I love me, too.  
*Bettie B. Youngs From: Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*  
*Publisher: Health Communications*

### **Do You Mind?**

Do you mind, my mum says,  
Not squeezing the toothpaste tube  
In the middle and leaving it  
A shapeless squashy mess;  
And do you mind  
Not just fishing the strawberries  
Out of the strawberry jam  
But eating some of the jelly stuff  
In between as well;  
And another thing:  
Do you mind putting your  
Toenail clippings in the waste bin  
Instead of shooting them  
All round the bathroom;  
And my dad joins in with  
Oh yes, and while we're about it  
Do you mind  
Not filling the car's ashtrays  
With sticky sweet papers  
So that I get goo on my fingers  
Every time I put out a fag;  
And my sister,  
Who's enjoying this, says  
Do you mind leaving my comb alone:  
I'm forever cleaning your  
Ratty old hairs out of it.  
Well actually, I *do* mind  
And I'm thinking of a few things  
To throw back at  
You perfect people.  
But for now:  
Do you mind packing in the  
Nagging, niggling, binding, bitching,  
Picking, pecking and criticising and  
Do you mind getting off my back  
and  
Do you mind me screaming  
HELP!  
*Eric Finney*

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Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

### **GRADE 9 : BOYS / GIRLS**

#### **I am an African child**

I am an African child,  
I am of African blood.  
The African sun is the only one  
I've known.  
I speak well in an African tone  
I rise in the morning to the  
African sky and feel its warmth.  
I wear a blanket of pride  
treasuring my culture and tradition,  
that is what makes me what I am.  
An African child.

It is my tradition,  
my African tradition, the African spirit  
that lies within me.  
It is the African love, I was born of  
the wisdom of the African ground;  
The perseverance and integrity  
in the land of my ancestors, Africa.

I have and always will be  
a born, bred and buttered  
African child.

It is a good musasa tree  
that remembers the seed that  
mothered it.

*Cynthia "Nana" Simelane*

#### **Holocaust museum, Washington**

I would like to open my mouth  
and cry out my anguish  
But my sound has  
it has sunk in my stomach  
And sits there, heavily.  
For when there was silence,  
Pain and compassion and helpless frustration  
and  
tears  
had dignity.

In the bright sun beam  
There next to me she says  
"Gosh, I wonder why she said it would  
take long? I must've done it in an hour."

And I sit here, heavily.  
I would like to open my mouth  
and cry out my anguish  
But my sound has  
it has privacy and dignity in the darkness and the  
silence  
of my stomach.  
*Alicia Woolf*

#### **Song of the galley-slaves**

We pulled for you when the wind was against us  
and the sails were low.  
Will you never let us go?  
We ate bread and onions when you took towns, or  
ran aboard  
quickly when you were beaten back by the foe.  
The Captians walked up and down the deck in fair  
weather  
singing songs, but we were below.

We fainted with our chins on the oars and you did not see  
 that we were idle, for we still swung to and fro.  
 Will you never let us go?  
 The salt made the oar-handles like shark-skin; our knees  
 were cut to the bone with salt-cracks; our hair was stuck  
 to our foreheads; and lips were cut to the gums, and  
 you whipped us because we would not row.  
 Will you never let us go?  
 But, in a little time, we shall run out of the port-holes as  
 the water runs along the oar-blade, and though you tell the  
 others to row after us you will never catch us till you  
 catch the oar-thresh and tie up the winds in the belly of the said. Aho!  
 Will you never let us go?  
*Rudyard Kipling*

### **RICHARD CORY**

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
 We people on the pavement looked at him:  
 He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
 Clean favoured, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
 And he was always human when he talked;  
 But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
 'Good-morning,' and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich – yes, richer than a king –  
 And admirably schooled in every grace:  
 In fine, we thought that he was everything  
 To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
 And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
 And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.  
*EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON*

### **I REMEMBER**

I remember sunny ice-cream days,  
 Chasing you around the pool  
 Watermelon floating days:  
 Time to laugh and play the fool.

I remember sleepy pancake nights,  
 Close together, by firelight  
 Cinnamon sugar dreamland nights:  
 Time to sigh and hold you tight.

I remember bitter coffee days,  
 Ripping, tearing things apart  
 Mash-and-liver angry days:  
 Time to cry and break your heart.  
 I remember chilly cold-toast nights,  
 In my heart there's winter blue  
 Sour vinegar lonely nights:  
 Time to lie and think of you.  
*Ninette Kriegler*  
*(Pretoria High School for Girls)*

### **YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE HIM A FABLE**

Discovered an old rocking horse in Woolworth's,  
 He tried to feed it but without much luck  
 So he stroked it, had a long conversation about  
 The trees it came from, the attics it had visited.

Tried to take it out then  
 But the store detective he  
 Called the manager who  
 Called the police who in court next morning said  
 "He acted strangely when arrested,  
 His statement read simply 'I believe in rocking-horses.'  
 We have reason to believe him mad."  
 "Quite so," said the prosecution,  
 "Bring in the rocking-horse as evidence."  
 "I'm afraid it's escaped sir" said the store manager,

"Left a hoofprint as evidence  
 On the skull of the store detective."  
 "Quite so," said the prosecution, fearful  
 of the neighing  
 Out in the corridor.  
*Brian Patten*

Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

### **GRADE 10 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### ***The Way through the Woods***

They shut the road through the woods  
 Seventy years ago.  
 Weather and rain have undone it again  
 And now you would never know  
 There was once a road through the woods  
 Before they planted the trees.  
 It is underneath the coppice and heath  
 An the thin anemones.  
 Only the keeper sees  
 That, where the ring-dove broods,  
 And the badgers roll at ease,  
 There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods  
Of a summer evening late,  
When the night air cools on the trout-ringed pools  
Where the otter whistles his mate,  
(They fear not man in the woods  
Because they see so few),  
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,  
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,  
Steadily cantering through  
The misty solitudes,  
As though they perfectly knew  
The old lost road through the woods . . .  
But there is no road through the woods!  
*Rudyard Kipling*

### **The Hermit**

I have barred the doors  
Of the place where I bide,  
I am old and afraid  
Of the world outside.

How the poor souls cry  
In the cold and the rain,  
I have blocked my ears,  
They shall call me in vain.

If I peer through the cracks  
Hardly daring draw breath,  
They are waiting there still  
Patient as death.

The maimed and the sick  
The tortured of soul,  
Arms outstretched as if  
I could help them be whole.

No shaft of the sun  
My hiding shall find,  
Go tell them outside  
I am deaf, I am blind.

Who will drive them away,  
Who will ease me my dread,  
Who will shout to the fools  
"He is dead! He is dead!"?

Sometimes they knock  
At the place where I hide,  
I am old, and afraid  
Of the world outside.

*Do they think, do they dream  
I will open the door?  
Let the world in  
And know peace no more?*  
*Alan Paton*

### **A love poem for my Country**

I have nothing to give you, but my anger

And the filaments of my hatred reach across the border.

You, you have sold many and me to exile.  
Now shorn of precious minds, you rely only on  
What hands can grow to build your crumbling  
image.

Your streets are littered with handcuffed men  
And the drums are thuds of the warden's spiked  
boots.

You wriggle with agony as the terrible twins, law  
and order,  
Call out the tune through the thick tunnel of barbed  
wire.

Here, week after week, the walls dissolve and are  
slim,  
The mist is clearing and we see you naked like  
A body that is straining to find itself but cannot  
And our hearts are thumping with pulses of desire  
or fear  
And our dreams are charred chapters of your  
history.

My country, remember I neither blinked nor went to  
sleep  
My country, I never let your life slide downhill  
And passively watched you, like a recklessly-driven  
car,  
Hurrying to you crash while the driver leapt out.

The days have lost their song and salt.  
We feel bored without our free laughter and voice.  
Every day thinking the same and discarding our  
hopes.  
Your days are loud with clanking cuffs  
On men's arms as they are led away to decay.

I know a day will come and wash away my pain  
And I will emerge from the night breaking into song  
Like the sun, blowing out these evil stars.  
*Frank Chipasula*

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Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

### **GRADE 10 : BOYS/GIRLS**

#### **One heart**

My one heart has many chambers.  
There are more places there, many more  
than I thought possible. My one heart.  
Luxury rooms with chandeliers,  
kitsch carpets and funny pictures.  
I used to believe all the rooms were austere,  
hard and spare. But no.  
These other doors have opened  
and how will they ever close again?  
The passageways themselves  
are full of mischief,  
the toilets have jokes on the walls.  
The kitchen is riotous and full of weather,

your weather, you dark and stormy  
and laughing weather.  
I now live in this house  
and I lose myself in it  
have lost myself in it  
found myself in it  
find myself in it  
find  
myself  
my  
self.  
*Leon de Kock*

### **The magi**

Imagine this, you who have charts and maps,  
guidebooks and satellites to plot our routes,  
experts, advisers on the many traps  
gaping for travelers, phrasebooks in the flutes  
and trills of foreign tongues, rates of exchange,  
inoculations to preserve your health,  
search parties should you vanish out of range,  
consuls to bring you home, sponsors with wealth,  
websites to show you how, the Tourist Boards  
eager to smooth your path, global TV,  
insurance policies, the package hordes  
lured by the brochures' bland security.

Imagine this: we did not know how far,  
or where, what tongue, what cost, what ills, what  
wraith  
of madness was attendant on that star.  
But still we journeyed on: an act of faith.  
*D.A. Prince*

### **The Thursday women's literacy class**

looks at Picasso's 'Guernica'  
during the bombing of Afghanistan

there is war  
and disorder,  
there is a cry  
it's like a cyclone, and here  
a man lies  
slain, he's dead

even the cow, the cow's eyes  
look sideways and forwards  
at the same time, why?

you chose it on purpose, this one,  
because of the bombings, didn't you?

Picasso is sad  
oh, makes me feel hollow

he is showing  
us we live in  
the dark,  
a dark so thick lamps can't shed light on it,  
all  
because  
of war  
and disorder  
and the horse  
they torture  
the horse, and the slain man, look  
his eyes wander round his skull, and the mother  
cries  
as her child dies in her arms, look  
the oxtail  
a twirl  
of smoke  
phantoms of the dead  
and dying float over crying dark disorder  
and war  
*A found poem by Lindsey Collen*

### **Dis fighting**

No more fighting please, why can't we stop dis  
fighting,  
dis fighting hurting me, why don't we start uniting,  
dem fighting in Angola, dem fighting in Manchester,  
dem fighting in Jamaica, and dem fighting in  
Leicester,  
well i might be black, my people were once slaves,  
but time goes on, and love comes in,  
so now we must behave,  
it could be that you're white, and i live in you land,  
no reason to make war, dis hard fe understand,  
skinheads stop dis fighting,  
rude boys stop dis fighting,  
dreadlocks stop dis fighting,  
we must start uniting,  
our children should be happy and they should live  
as one,  
we have to live together so let a love grow strong,  
let us think about each other, there's no need to  
compete,  
if two loves love each other then one love is  
complete,  
no more fighting please, we have to stop dis  
fighting,  
dis fighting hurting me, time we start uniting,  
dis fighting have no meaning, dis fighting is not  
fair,  
dis fighting makes a profit for people who don't  
care,  
no more fighting please, we have stop dis fighting,  
Dis fighting hurting me, the heathen love dis  
fighting.  
*by Benjamin Zephaniah*

## **SUPERSTITION**

I know  
that when a grumbling old woman  
Is the first thing I meet in the morning  
I must rush back to bed  
And cover my head.  
That wandering sheep on a sultry afternoon  
Are really men come from their dark graves  
To walk in light  
In mortal sight.  
That when my left hand or eyelid twitches  
Or when an owl hoots from a nearby tree  
I should need pluck  
It means bad luck.  
That drink spilled goes to ancestral spirits,  
That witches dance in clumps of bananas:  
That crumbs must be left in pots and plates  
Until the morn  
For babes unborn.  
That it's wrong to stand in doorways at dusk  
For the ghosts must pass – they have right of way!  
That when a hidden root trips me over  
Fault's not in my foot.  
It's an evil root.  
That if I sleep with feet towards the door  
I'll not long be fit  
I know it – yes I know it!

*MINJYI KARIBO*

## **THE DANCER**

'What was she like?' they asked, and then I knew  
That I had never looked upon her face  
That I could tell them of her timeless grace,  
Curve of the neck, light gesture of a hand;  
The picture of a swallow's flight I drew.  
And hoped, perhaps, that they might understand.

'What colour was her hair?' I do not know,  
And yet I think it misted a white arm  
And mingled with her dancing. There was charm  
In every movement, and of all most sweet,  
Most unforgotten wind-swept to and fro,  
The leaf-blown motion of her elfin feet.

'Had her eyes beauty?' I cannot tell, alas!  
I saw the magic in a changing dream ...  
A flash of silver on a wandering stream ...  
And I have kept for my remembering  
How through the morning skies the wild swans  
pass,  
And I recall the tremor of a wing.

*Celia Randall*

## **TALKING HANDS**

African hands, that flutter as they talk  
without which words would be  
meat without salt.  
Each hand that turns like  
wheat upon its stalk  
can plead, pray, remonstrate or pacify,  
African hands that talk.

Or young musician's hands, the hands that touch  
string, bow and key to fill the air with sound,  
these hands have life.  
Each hand, precise and technical,  
fingers the crutch

on which arpeggios lean, narrow and clever,  
Musician's hands, that sing.  
And listening hands, the seeing eye of the blind,  
whose delicate sense transmits  
the written word.  
Each hand serves as an eye,  
moving like darting birds to touch and find,  
fingers like needles,  
pricking out each sound;  
the windows of the mind.

*Phillipa Berlyn*

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Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

## **GRADE 11 : BOYS/GIRLS**

### ***Poems at Bargain Prices***

Poems, You want poems? We got poems!

Poems to make you dream  
While the rulers of the country are busy.  
Poems to send you to sleep  
While they test their tanks and their guns.

We got poems.

Poems for you and your aftermeal sleep.  
Poems which do not disturb you nor  
The quiet of a Sunday afternoon,  
When the sermon in the morning was comforting  
And the chicken at lunch was tasty.

We got poems.

Ah, you sleep?  
May you wake in peace!  
Because we got other poems.  
Poems which will disturb you  
With announcements of bloodshed,  
War, atrocities, atomic bombs, and jails.  
Jails, visible from the window  
Of your peaceful bedroom,  
Whenever you open the blinds.

Poems.



Words. Words. By Whitey.  
No. No. No. By Whitey  
I know I'm trapped.  
Helpless  
Hopeless  
Trapped me whitey. Meem wanna ge oat Fuc  
Pschwee e ep boobooduboooodu blllll  
Black books,  
    Flesh blood words shitrrr Aaa  
    Amen.  
*Mongane Wally Serote (South Africa)*

### **I AM A GIRL OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

During the storm I create Peace in my soul  
I close my eyes until the storm is over  
Like an eagle I try each day in my life  
To reach where my heart is.

Hope that I have inside, to give me  
Strength to be what I want to be  
I let no one harm my soul  
I always focus on my future.

During the night I dream about freedom  
During the day I build happiness in my soul  
Each day I shape my life.  
Trying my very best to do only the right thing.

I am born to be bold and brave  
To have faith in everything I do  
To help those who are being criticised everyday  
To renew hope in their lives.

Even if it may seem to dark  
My heart will lead me to a place of Peace.  
I am living for tomorrow.  
Not for today  
Only because  
I am a girl of the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
*Zandile Sylvia Mazibuko*

### **If I could tell you**

Time will say nothing but I told you so,  
Time only knows the price we have to pay;  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

If we should weep when clowns put on their show,  
If we should stumble when musicians play,  
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

There are no fortunes to be told, although,  
Because I love you more than I can say,  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

The winds must come from somewhere when they  
blow,

There must be reasons why the leaves decay;  
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

Perhaps the roses really want to grow  
The vision seriously intends to stay;  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

Suppose the lions all get up and go,  
And all the brooks and soldiers run away;  
Will Time say nothing but I told you so?  
If I could tell you I would let you know.  
*W.H. Auden*

### **Pilate's wife**

Firstly, his hands – a woman's. Softer than mine,  
with pearly nails, like shells from Galilee.  
Indolent hands. Camp hands that clapped for  
grapes.  
Their pale, mothy touch made me flinch. Pontius.

I longed for Rome, home, someone else. When the  
Nazarene  
entered Jerusalem, my maid and I crept out,  
bored stiff, disguised, and joined the frenzied  
crowd.  
I tripped, clutched the bridle of an ass, looked up

and there he was. His face? Ugly. Talented.  
He looked at me. I mean he looked at me. My God.  
His eyes were eyes to die for. Then he was gone,  
his rough men shouldering a pathway to the gates.

The night before his trial, I dreamt of him.  
His brown hands rouched me. Then it hurt.  
Then blood. I saw that each tough palm was  
skewered  
by a nail. I woke up, sweating, sexual, terrified.

Leave him alone. I sent a warning note, then  
quickly dressed.  
When I arrived, the Nazarene was crowned with  
thorns.  
The crowd was baying for Barabbas. Pilate saw me,  
looked away, then carefully turned up his sleeves

and slowly washed his useless, perfumed hands.  
They seized the prophet then and dragged him out,  
up to the Place of Skulls. My maid knows all the  
rest.  
Was he God? Of course not. Pilate believed he was.

### **YOU WEREN'T THERE**

You weren't there  
the day I fell  
in the school playground –  
my cries shattering the quiet of the sterile corridors.

You weren't there  
to wipe away the stains of failure  
when I swam my first race –  
and lost.

You weren't there  
to pick up the shattered pieces of my heart  
the night he phoned  
and said it was all over.

You weren't there  
the day my dreams come true,  
I came home  
to a lonely emptiness.

You weren't there  
to pick me up from school  
to plant a caring kiss on my troubled brow  
to speak mother/daughter things – trivialities –  
Yet no so trivial.  
You weren't there  
Ever.

And soon  
I'll be gone –  
like a warm breath  
on a cold Highveld morning.

Forever.

Mother  
*Carolyn Esser (Kingsmead College)*

### GROUP THERAPY

We were talking about love  
(not daring to use that word)  
as they sat about me  
in a circle.  
The boys and the girls  
each with a puppet on one hand.

He said –  
'Mine's an old man.  
He's so very hungry  
and so very much alone.'  
And she in the softest voice –  
'My puppet's ugly  
everyone hates her.'

I searched for words  
to form a bridge  
between them.

The old man looked at the ugly puppet.  
The paper heads nodded gravely  
while the group waited.

And I, groping in my word-world  
waited for the right words  
to set them free.  
On an impulse,  
he stretched forward  
and gently swept her hair  
out of her face.

*Bernard Levinson*

### FASHION

We're at the mall invading peoples' privacy  
Everyone's eyes getting their weekend  
exercise!

People in couples ... People in groups  
The rejected few in a single man's crew  
Appreciating fine men in their expensive  
sneakers

Who's in ... Who's not  
Who's fly and not up to date

You can feel the air getting denser  
As the tension gets tenser  
You would swear you had enough gossip  
To write a weekend ad  
So the question is ...  
Do you, have the fashion to suit the  
occasion?

*Marian Nyako-Lartey (15)*

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Extract from: "DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"

### GRADE 12 : BOYS/GIRLS

#### *Prayer Before Birth*

I am not yet born; O hear me.  
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat  
or the  
clubfooted ghouel come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.  
I fear the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me,  
trees to talk  
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born, forgive me  
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my  
words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think  
me,  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,

my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me  
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take  
when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me,  
mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is  
God  
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would freeze my  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal  
automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill  
me.

Otherwise kill me.

*Louis Macneice From: The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice  
Faber & Faber Ltd.*

### **Somebody Should Have Taught Him**

I went to a birthday party  
but I remembered what you said.  
You told me not to drink at all,  
so I had a Sprite instead.  
I felt proud of myself,  
the way you said I would,  
that I didn't choose to drink and drive,  
though some friends said I should.  
I knew I made a healthy choice and  
your advice to me was right  
as the party finally ended  
and the kids drove out of sight.  
I got into my own car,  
sure to get home in one piece,  
never knowing what was coming  
something I expected least.  
Now I'm lying on the pavement.  
I can hear the policeman say,  
"The kid that caused the wreck was drunk."  
His voice seems far away.  
My own blood is all around me,  
as I try hard not to cry.  
I can hear the paramedic say,

"This girl is going to die."  
I'm sure the guy had no idea,  
while he was flying high,  
because he chose to drink and drive  
that I would have to die.  
So why do people do it,  
knowing that it ruins lives?  
But now the pain is cutting me  
like a hundred stabbing knives.  
Tell my sister not to be afraid,  
tell Daddy to be brave,  
and when I go to heaven to  
put "Daddy's Girl" on my grave.  
Someone should have taught him  
that it's wrong to drink and drive.  
Maybe if his mom and dad had,  
I'd still be alive.  
My breath is getting shorter,  
I'm getting really scared.  
These are my final moments,  
and I'm so unprepared.  
I wish that you could hold me, Mom,  
as I lie here and die.  
I wish that I could say  
I love you and good-bye.

*Retold by Jan Watkins From: Chicken Soup for the Teenage  
Soul Publisher: Health Communications*

### **Macavity: the Mystery Cat**

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden  
Paw —  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying  
Squad's despair;  
For when they reach the scene of crime —  
*Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of  
gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime —  
*Macavity's not there!*

You may seek him in the basement, you may look  
up in the air —  
But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not  
there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;  
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes,  
are sunken in  
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is  
highly domed;  
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are  
uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with  
movements  
like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always  
wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of  
depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him  
in the square —  
But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not  
there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at  
cards.)  
And his footprints are not found in any file of  
Scotland Yard's.  
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is  
rifled,  
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's  
been stifled,  
*Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis  
past repair —*  
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not  
there!*

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone  
astray,  
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by  
the way,  
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or the  
stair —  
But it's useless to investigate — *Macavity's not  
there!*  
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret  
Service say:  
'It *must* have been Macavity!' — but he's a mile  
away.  
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his  
thumbs,  
Or engaged in doing complicated long division  
sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity.  
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and  
suavity.  
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:  
At whatever time the deed took place —  
**MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!**

And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds  
are widely known  
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention  
Griddlebone)  
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all  
the time  
Just controls their operation: the Napoleon of  
Crime!  
*T.S. Eliot*  
*From: Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*

Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

## GRADE 12 : BOYS / GIRLS

### Pope Joan

After I learned to transubstantiate  
unleavened bread  
into the sacred host

and swung the burning frankincense  
till blue-green snakes of smoke  
coiled round the hem of my robe

and swayed through those fervent crowds,  
high up in a papal chair,  
blessing and blessing the air,

nearer to heaven  
than cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests,  
being Vicar of Rome,

having made the Vatican my home,  
like the best of men,  
in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti amen,

but twice as virtuous as them  
I came to believe  
that I did not believe a word,

so I tell you now,  
daughters or brides of the Lord,  
that the closest I felt

to the power of God  
was the sense of a hand  
lifting me, flinging me down,

lifting me, flinging me down,  
as my baby pushed out  
from between my legs

where I lay in the road  
in my miracle,  
not a man or a pope at all.

### Elvis's twin sister

Are you lonesome tonight! Do you miss me tonight!  
Elvis is alive and she's female: Madonna

In the convent, y'all,  
I tend the gardens,  
watch things grow,  
pray for the immortal soul  
of rock 'n' roll.

They call me  
Sister Presley here.



my crime.

Now a holy man convicts my sinner's heart  
Before they send me on a journey:  
from this world I must depart.

After ninety-nine hours of pure torture,  
the gate of hell ajar: the end to the gruely  
tunnel.

seems never ending far.  
But I reach the end of my lifeline  
and strap on the prisoner's end.  
With a strange and peaceful feeling.  
I wonder where I'll be sent.

I'm stripped of all my coverage and told  
"You'll be much safer"  
Slowly they pull the hatch on my life and  
send me  
to meet my maker ...  
*Esmé Scholtz (17)*

### TRAPPED

I'm trapped in my own desires  
caught in my own fears  
murdered by my emotions  
sliced by my feelings  
I'm torn between love and hate,  
faith and rebellion  
Somebody help me  
I'm trying to break free  
but His soul is drowning me  
drawing me to his Spirit  
My heart is aching  
fading from pain  
My eyes are crying  
blinded by love

My body is shivering  
an icy cold breeze  
leaving me empty  
Fighting for a loss that never began  
*Remona Rose (16)*

### From THE PROPHET

Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving.  
And he answered:  
You give but little when you give your possessions.  
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.  
For what are your possessions but things you keep  
and guard for fear you may need them to-morrow?  
And to-morrow, what shall to-morrow bring to  
the over-prudent dog burying bones in the track-  
less sand as he follows the pilgrims to the holy city?  
And what is fear of need but need itself?

It is not dread of thirst when you well is full, the  
thirst that is unquenchable?  
There are those who give little of the much which  
they have – and they give it for recognition and  
their  
hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome.  
And there are those who have little and give it all.  
These are the believers in life and the bounty of  
life,  
and their coffer is never empty.  
There are those who give with joy, and that joy is  
their reward.  
And there are those who give with pain, and that  
pain is their baptism.  
And there are those who give and know not pain in  
giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with  
mindfulness  
of virtue;  
They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes  
its  
fragrance into space.  
Through the hands of such as these God speaks,  
and  
from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.  
*Kahlil Gibran*

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Extract from: **"DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"**

### OPEN SECTION : MEN/LADIES

#### *Hottentot venus*

My name is Saartjie Baartman and I come from Kat  
River  
they called me the Hottentot Venus  
they rang up the curtains on a classy peepshow two  
pennies  
two pennies in the slot and I'd wind up  
shift a fan and roll my rolypoly bum  
and rock the capitals of Europe into mirth  
I was a special voluptuary a squealing passion  
they had never seen anything like it before  
Little Sarah twenty six born on the vlei past  
Grahamstown  
bought for a song and a clap of the hands  
a speculative sketch come to life a curiosity  
of natural science weighed measured  
exported on show two pennies two pennies  
in the Gallery of Man I am unique  
I am lonely now I always was out here  
my deathbed a New Year's eve  
a salon couch girdled with reporters and I turned  
my complexion to the wall and dreamed  
of a knife cutting deep in a springbok's hide  
and they woke me with brandy for smelling salts  
and I wouldn't wake again in their august company  
my soul creeps under cairns where  
wayside travellers throw another stone in my  
memory

two pennies two pennies dropped on my eyes  
they laid me in state in my crinoline robe  
my hands folded coyly as they always were  
and I let them bury my body so celebrated so  
sensational  
they could never do while I was alive  
what they wanted to do sink me in wax and decant  
my brain  
and put me in a case in the Museum of Man  
I stare out at the Eiffel Tower my hands covering  
my vaginal flaps my own anomaly  
The kneebone connected to the thighbone  
connected to  
the hipbone connected to the spine and the skull  
they mounted me without beads or skins or quivers  
Saartjie Baartman is my name and I know  
my place I know my rights I put down my foot  
and the Tuileries Gardens shake I put down  
my foot and the Seine changes course I put  
down my foot and the globe turns upside down  
I rattle my handful of bones and the dead arise.  
*Stephen Gray*  
*Publisher: David Phillips*

### **Great-Great-Grandmother**

Bolt upright, reading her Bible for hours  
in a wicker chair on the front stoep in the winter,  
in summer under the pepper trees whose lacy  
shadows  
wavered over the lacy shawl,  
drawn tight across her little brittle shoulders.

When her sight grew dim someone might read to  
her-  
but deafness following shut that door.  
So then she'd sit, there, crocheting for hours  
by a remnant of sight and what sense of touch  
was left in fingers as dry and shiny as silver leaves  
freckled gold and brown.  
But mostly her hands lay limp in her lap  
except for occasional desperate twitches  
which shook the shawl round her shoulders,  
the shawl with which she seemed to shelter  
her loneliness like a deformity  
from a frightened and frightening world.

Alone. Husband and all her own children gone:  
living among the noise of children's children  
who found it hard to come near the awful  
weak-eyed eagle of a race now almost extinct.  
Sometimes, though, one of the wives in fumbling  
compassion  
would make a child ask the old, old lady for a story.  
She seldom obliged, reluctant to switch her mind  
from her beginnings and endings to theirs.

But when she did her stories were mostly biblical  
where the miraculous burst into the matter-of-fact  
and the weirdly wonderful was all mixed up  
with things a child could see at once  
were as they always are.

Or sometimes she'd talk of pioneer days, long treks,  
locusts darkening the sky, assegai wounds  
that would only heal to herbs that the bushmen  
knew,  
the coffin always ready in the loft, the frequent  
births, betrothals, burials.

But rarely of her childhood over the water, among  
hills called the cotswolds, of things we never knew,  
like snow,  
like chestnuts, and nightingales, whole hillsides  
deep in perpetual lawn with not a stone to be seen,  
trees, without thorns, as high as the house, things  
as lovely, strange and barely credible  
as chapters in the bible.

Each sundown her custom was to go for a slow,  
slow walk  
along the selfsame track that had brought her there  
three score and all but ten years before,  
her long mauve gown trailing a shiff of lavender  
through miles of heady mimosa groves,  
her cheek far softer and smoother  
than and wild petal or fruit.

I was a young savage then, forever  
chasing rats and lizards with my catty.  
Springtime it was – what passes for spring up there  
–  
that gradual crescendo of heat with little change or  
colour,  
that thorough desiccation of air - -  
before the great clouds stride across the sky  
meet growling, and sighing fall.

The blue-headed lizard flicked his tail  
and my futile pebble clicked on his purple boulder.  
Released from their fatal focus, my eyes drifted up  
and there she was, not fifty yards away, stock-still,  
black,  
next to a wild pomegranate, flaming yellow, intense  
against the funereal mauves of the scrub.

Was she resting, or dreaming, or peering with  
lashless eyes  
at that annual but always surprising outburst of  
yellow?  
And then, behind her, I saw the whirlwind coming;  
now lurching like an inspired dancer  
who snatches a beautiful moment  
from the verge of a hideous fall,  
now stalking straight and poised  
like the holy pillar of smoke that led the isrealites  
into the promised land.

She did not hear or see it come.

It struck her and she was gone.

For a dizzy split-second I thought:  
She's been taken up to heaven, like Elijah!

And her shawl spun out of the sky and settled  
beside me.  
Was I Elisha, inheriting  
her mantle of powerful pain?

But then I saw her dress like a gnarled old branch  
black in the flame of the bush.

I ran up crying, trying to help her.  
But she'd sized things up, as always;  
she never lost her head.  
'Go to the house. Fetch Thomas.'

In her fall she had clutched at the thorny branches.  
That's how the palms of her hands were pierced.

She was three long week a-dying.

There were times when she struggled to speak,  
but it was too late, tetanus being what it is.

They buried her between two thunderstorms.  
The scent the damp earth breathed  
from the parted lips of her grave  
was neither bitter nor sweet.

I did not weep then;  
it is now that I weep.  
*Guy Butler*

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Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"

## OPEN SECTION: MEN / LADIES

### Adriaanspoort

Down there below  
where I can see no spoor  
of man or animal  
there is a winding  
of what used to be  
there is a swaying  
of lanky tufts of grass  
there is a meandering  
of leafy protea trees  
there is an ageing  
of variegated pelindaba rocks  
and there is a thought  
of dead spirits  
once clashing by day  
only to retreat at sunset  
leaving these parts wild at night  
yet serene under the moon

where I stand  
there is no stench with which to live  
only the giddy smell of braaied boerewors  
already the plastic plates are full of stywe mielie-  
pap  
a table is laden with sliced cheese and green salads

for amidst the chattering of adults in French  
and the fooling around of our children in no  
language of words  
we are going to revel  
beyond the mischievous hand of man

there is a spirit moving where we are  
we turn faces to avoid it  
hardly being successful  
for we are part of the being of things

there are clouds gathering above our heads  
we say it will not rain  
hardly being correct  
for the earth needs to be swept at times

it rains! ... pula! ... it rains! ... pula!  
*Sipho Sepamla*

### Penguin on the beach

Stranger in his own element,  
Sea-casualty, the castaway manikin  
Waddles in his tailored coat-tails. Oil  
Has spread a deep commercial stain  
Over his downy shirtfront. Sleazy, grey,  
It dogs the sleekness. Far too well

He must recall the past, to be so cautious:  
Watch him step into the waves. He shudders  
Under the froth, slides, slips, on the wet sand,

Escaping to dryness, dearth, in a white cascade,  
An involuntary shouldering off of gleam.  
Hands push him back into the sea. He stands

In pained and silent expostulation.  
Once he knew a sunlit, leaping smoothness,  
But close within his head's small knoll, and dark

He retains the image; oil on sea,  
Green slicks, black lassos of sludge  
Sleaving the breakers in a stain-spread scarf.  
cleaving, splitting

He shudders now from the clean flinching wave,  
Turns and plods back up the yellow sand,  
Ineffably weary, triumphantly sad.

He is immensely wise: he trusts nobody. His senses  
Are clogged with experience. He eats  
Fish from his Saviour's hands, and it tastes black.

From a University Anthology of English Poetry  
*Dr Beeton SG Kossiek E Pereira*

### **CONSTANTLY RISKING ABSURDITY**

Constantly risking absurdity  
and death  
whenever he performs  
above the heads  
of his audience  
the poet like an acrobat  
climbs on rime  
to a high wire of his own making  
and balancing on eyebeams  
above a sea of faces  
paces his way  
to the other side of day  
performing entrechats  
and sleight-of-foot tricks  
and other high theatrics  
and all without mistaking  
any thing  
for what it may not be  
  
For he's the super realist  
who must perforce perceive  
taut truth  
before the taking of each stance or step  
in his supposed advance  
toward that still higher perch  
where Beauty stands and waits  
with gravity  
to start her death-defying leap  
  
And he  
a little charleychaplin man  
who may or may not catch  
her fair eternal form  
spreadeagled in the empty air  
of existence

*Lawrence Ferling*