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© 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 Serraillier

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

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

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.
Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

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
aren’t 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

Penny Wise
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

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**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,
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

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!

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 whirrr,
Some knock and knock.
Some purr
And hummmmmmmm
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,
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

Extract from: "DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002"

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 bobbled 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.

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 pubbles 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

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

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
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 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

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…..

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.

(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
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!

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

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
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.

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 my 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
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!

Ladies and jellyspoons
Ladies and jellyspoons:
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 you 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 sniffs 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 by 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 tremulously 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
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 Egyptian 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.
Peta, 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 camp 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

---

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,
or 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

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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

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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.

---

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.
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

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.

---

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.
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 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.

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.
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*

*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

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

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 cy-
clone, 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

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,

Dis fighting hurting me, the heathen love dis fighting.
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!

MINUYI 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 fight 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

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.

DI KONOKONO SILLABUS 2002
GRADE 11 : BOYS/GIRLS
Poems at Bargain Prices
Poems, You want poems? We got poems!
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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.
You do not want to hear these poems?

They will come to you nevertheless.

*Peter Horn*

---

**The Bomb**

plundering recklessly through the pale sky possessed by the devil

It descended slowly

slowly ever so slowly with a diabolical shriek and a mushroom of eerie grey smoke enveloping and choking the frail blue sky to its cruel destination of earth

It roared like the devil with evil gnarled arms slashing the atmosphere with vengeance and sharp cosmic rays

It blinded the sun

It challenged mankind to defy the feat

The smoke rose as a sinister nightmare but man stood back bulbous-eyed terrified

BOMB BLAST !!

the place ablaze a living haze … of people chaos reigned foolish men with shrunken egos outdid themselves this time.

Debbie James

*From: Poetry for pleasure Macmillan*

---

**City Johnnesburg**

This way I salute you:

My hand pulses to my back trousers pocket

Or into my inner jacket pocket

For my pass, my life,

Jo’burg City.

My hand like a starved snake rears my pockets

For my thin, ever lean wallet,

While my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger,

Jo’burg City.

My stomach also devours copper and papers

Don’t you know?

Jo’burg City, I salute you;

When I run out, or roar in a bus to you,

I leave behind me, my love,

My comic houses and people, my dongas and my ever whirling dust,

My death

That’s so related to me as a wink to the eye.

Jo’burg City

I travel on your black and white and roboted roads,

Through your thick iron breath that you inhale

At six in the morning and exhale from five noon.

Jo’burg City

That is the time when I come to you,

When you neon flowers flaunt from your electrical wind,

That is the time when I leave you,

When you neon flowers flaunt their way through the falling darkness

On your cement trees.

And as I go back, to my love,

My dongas, my dust, my people, my death.

Where death lurks in the dark like a blade in the flesh.

I can feel your roots, anchoring your might, my feebleness

In my flesh, in my mind, in my blood,

And everything about you says it,

That, that is all you need of me.

Jo’burg City, Johannesburg,

Listen when I tell you,

There is no fun, nothing, in it.

When you leave the women and men with such frozen expressions,

Expressions that have tears like furrows of soil erosion,

Jo’burg City, you are dry like death,

Jo’burg City, Johannesburg, Jo’burg City.

*Mogane Wally Serote*

---

*Extract from: "NEA PROSPECTUS 2005"*

**GRADE 11 : BOYS / GIRLS**

**Black bells**

And words,

Make pain,

Like poverty can make pain.

Words

Words,

Like thought, are elusive,

Like life

Where everybody is trapped

I wonder who trapped me,

For I am trapped,

Twice,

Like,

A word can mean two things,

Who, and Whitey

Trapped me.

I read.

Words,

Words.

Trying to get out
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 boooodubooobodu bllli
Black books,
   Flesh blood words shitrrr Aaa
Amen.
Mongane Wally Serote (South Africa)

I AM A GIRL OF THE 21st 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 21st 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)

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 ghoul 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,
ever 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 had from side to side, with
movements
like a snake;
And when you think he’s half asleep, he’s always
wide awake.

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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 nominee 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.
The Reverend Mother digs the way I move my hips just like my brother.

Gregorian chant drifts out across the herbs, Pascha nostrum immolatus est..... I wear a simple habit, darkish hues,
a wimple with a novice-sewn lace band, a rosary, a chain of keys, a pair of good and sturdy blue suede shoes.

I think of it as Graceland here, a land of grace. It puts my trademark slow lopsided smile back on my face.

Lawdy. I’m alive and well. Long time since I walked down Lonely Street towards Heartbreak Hotel.

MOZAMBIQUE
There is nothing here only drunken words stumbling and burping over commas, crashing into syntaxes and precariously hanging around cliff-faced fullstops.

There is come void wining our faces and voices that hand of a blind groping for solid in that darkness around darkness.

There is patriotism dark suited in deja-vu performing the limp clicked dance around vague possibilities.

But wait ..... there are people here Peoplepeoplepeoplepeople so beautiful and complex like my doctor’s handwriting.

LOOKING AT GLACIERS dear dad another birthday wooshed by today. Did you ever dream that you’d be where you are ? way back when when you dreamed around the back yard with mud on your legs and another tear in your shorts (hoping ma wouldn’t notice) or at school when the wind gusted on cold days looking out the window on deserted grounds when boredom lay like encyclopaedia dust undisturbed by anything real and thoughts were too far away snatched by what you could be doing when. Were your bones the sort that knew or were they readying for the next soccer game on the weekend with the guys at so-and-so’s house? inbetween the mischief laughter planning sniffing chattering sneaking shrieking snooping hovering drooling near hearty almost-done braais Did you take a quick peek was there a vision did you ever dream that one day you’d turn around and this is where you’d be? Alicia Woolf

ON DEATH ROW I still remember his echoing screams Constantly they haunt my dreams. I can still remember his bloodstained shirt: his lifeless body beneath smoldering dirt.

And yet I still don’t remember the reason or the rime But the damage was done: I’ve committed
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 my 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 an 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

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 cooly 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.

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 growing, 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,
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

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

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

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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