

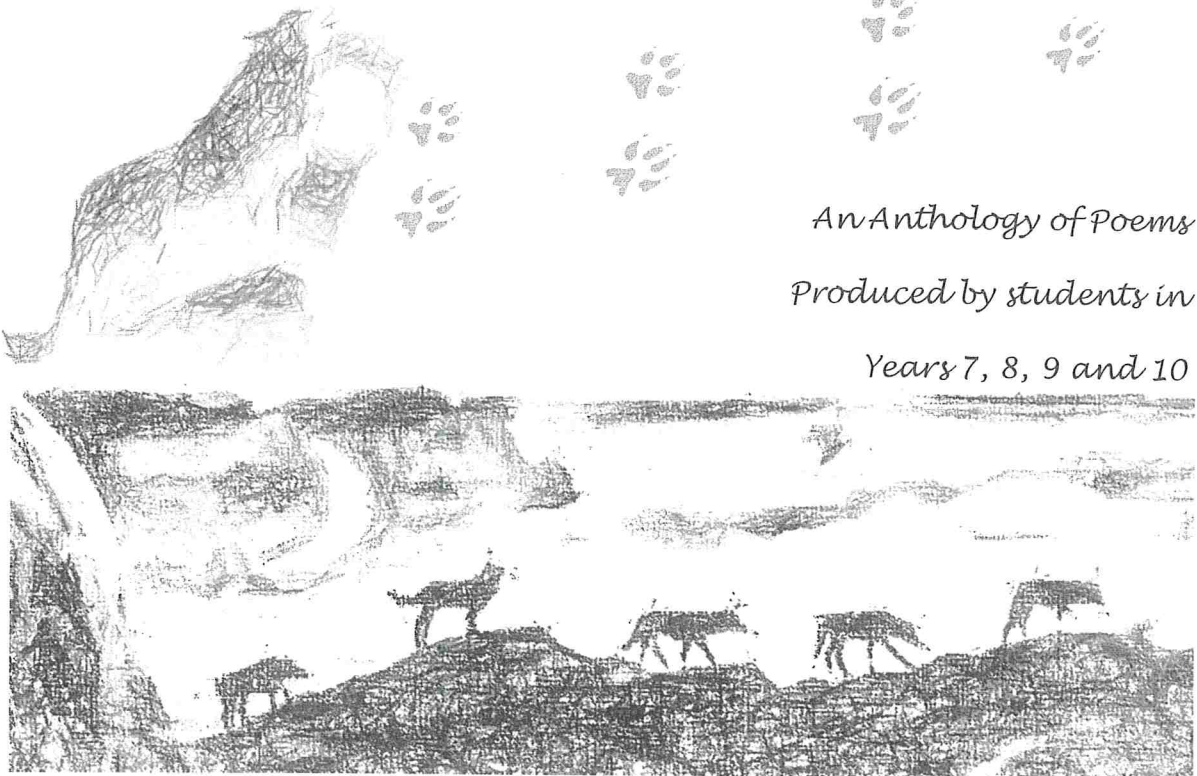


The
Mountbatten School
Poetry Festival
2010

An Anthology of Poems

Produced by students in

Years 7, 8, 9 and 10



*With sincere thanks to Joan McGavin
for judging this year's poems -
and especially for taking the time to make helpful and
encouraging comments on so many of the entries.*

Poetry Festival 2010

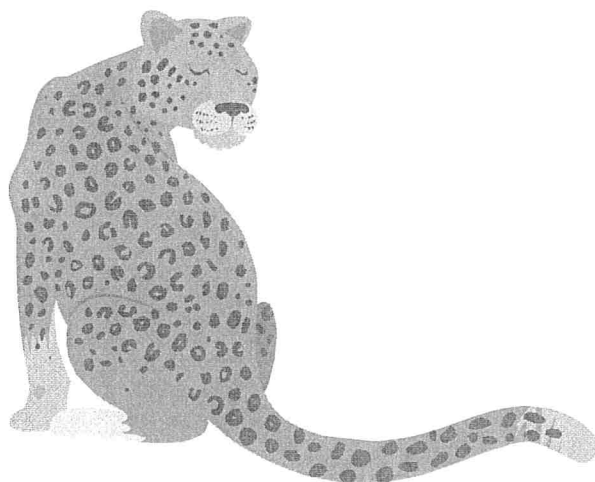
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The Leopard

A leopard lay amidst trees, as elusive as a stealth fighter flying
overhead,
Washing his rosette tattoos in the bright emerald leaves, with no
desire to play, or run.
Lazing around in the noonday sun, like a television on standby, his
hooded eyes seem half asleep.
However, secretly tuning to the scent waves with his built in radar,
ready to pounce,
he gets his signal and like a siren on red alert he dives to his post.
Without warning he springs down from his tree
and scans the grassy plains once more.
His mates watch lazily, getting their golden tan in the sun,
not bothering to move.
His F1 engines begin to fire up; he sets off in pursuit
immediately locking onto his target.
Like an aggravated surface to air missile, he fires without
mercy;
leaving his victim with no chance.
Afterwards, tensely drags the dead carcass up to his mates,
where they devour it mercilessly, as they rip the bones from its
flesh.



It's the imagery (especially the similes) here
that makes your description of the leopard so memorable.
You incorporate human weapons – well chosen for their
connotations of speed, power and deadly destructiveness –
to communicate the nature of your leopard effectively.

Joan McGavin

Simon Lockyer
Year 7
First Place

My Orangutang Poem

*The orangutang's magnificent muscular body,
So well trained
Acrobatically guides itself,
Swiftly and freely through the rainforest trees,
Scanning for a home.*

*Surrounded by dry wrinkles,
Like the cracked plains of Africa,
His thick abnormal lips shudder,
And his cheeks of fat wobble,
As he shouts his crazy gibberish to his companions.*

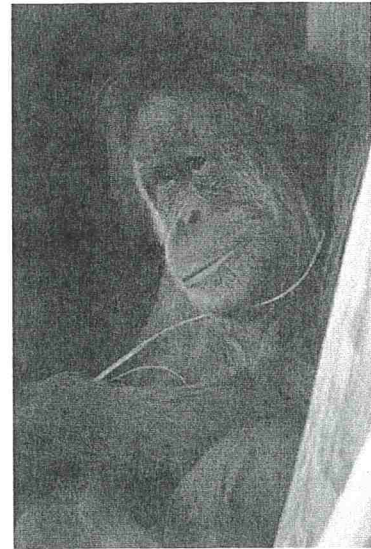
*His mysterious, deep, black eyes,
Spot a place for him to stay,
His strong, chubby feet,
Land with a thud,
As he lands amazingly balanced.*

*following
He proudly struts around,
Like a human,
Then stops,
To forage another's long, fine, auburn hair,
For any living creature of edibility.*

*He then continues,
His gangster like strut,
Exaggerating the arm movement,
Showing off his intimidating span,
Enough to frighten a ghost.*

Well done. This is a well observed and confidently expressed account of the creature, that succeeds in moving beyond a mere description of its physical attributes. The similes – e.g. “His gangster like strut” or “Like a gymnast” – are particularly good.

Joan McGavin



*He then goes hunting for food,
And returns,
With his fine threads of hair*

*Ending casually,
Like a gymnast.*

*He finally lies down,
To sleep,
With his family,
At peace
In the beautiful forest.*

Oliver White
Year 7
Second Place

My African Elephant Poem



The wrinkled skin
Is as dry as the African plains.
The trunk sways
In the scorching perishing heat
It listens out
To hear if poachers are out there.
Smells everywhere

In every direction for food to eat.

It's found a tree

A scrumptious delicious tree.

Elephant's eye

So exquisite and dainty.

The eyelashes

Curly like woven tree branches.

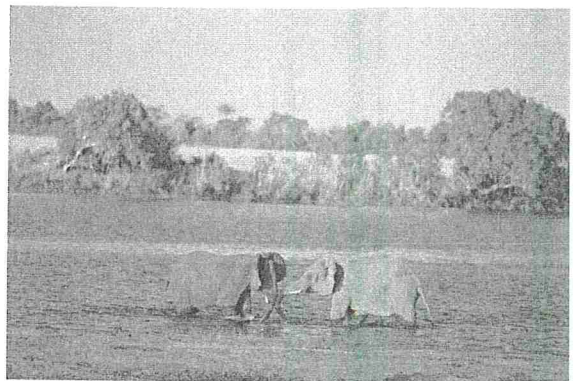
It reaches for leaves

And extends its trunk elegantly.

The water hole is a place to spray
water.

Dry savannah

Is sun-baked and moisture less.



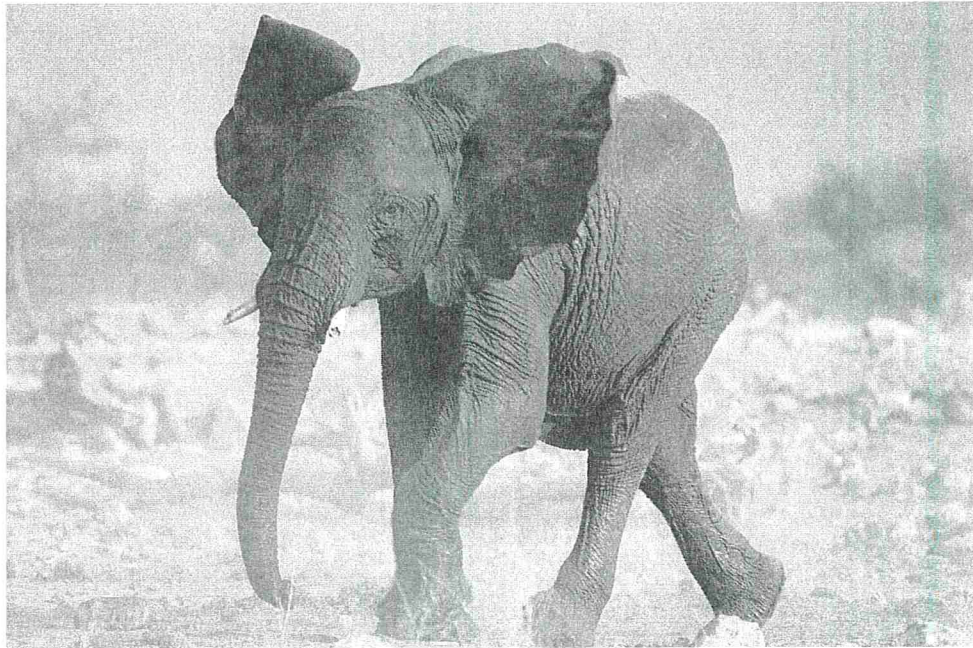
A well observed account of a creature everyone knows
but about whom we rarely think deeply. This made me
reconsider the creature. There are lots of visual,
sensual details that enliven your account.

Joan McGavin

Gabby McEvoy
Year 7
Third Place

My Elephant Zoom Poem

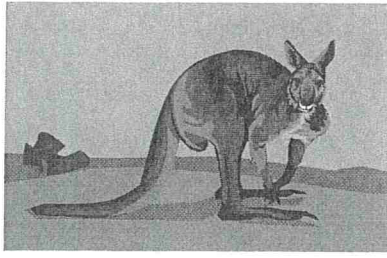
Its coat's a shrivelled up plate of armour
As dry as the African plains.
Its feet as big as boulders stomp along;
Wings flapping, ready to take off
Its tusks are like witches white curved fingernails
The long thick trunk swings side to side
Triumphant and powerful the voice calls.
The scent of freedom all around
On an endless trek to find leaves and lakes.
Majestic, grand and sumptuous.



Well done. This is full of effective detail. The metaphors and similes you use are particularly strong.

Joan McGavin

Issy Mallon
Year 7
Commended



The Jumping Kangaroo

Its legs are like compressed springs just
waiting to be unleashed.

The awesome boxing machine: a little animal
with an iron fist.

Satellite ears get themselves into the right^t
position and move to the direction of noise.

In this vast amount of land a whole world of^f
Kangaroos merge with the barrenness.

The kangaroo is never alone: there's always a^a
friend around the corner.

Its long slithering tail steadies the animal onⁿ
Its bouncy journey.

Its furry purse a home for its little joey.

Well done. You made me reconsider an animal I tend to take
for granted. That first line is stunning; it really drew me into the
poem and made me want to read on.

Joan McGavin

Liam Brown
Year 7
Commended

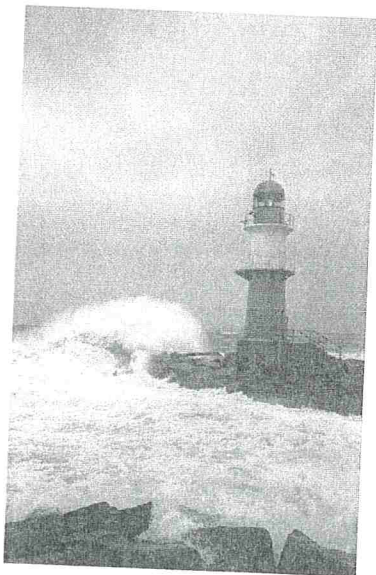
ANGER



Anger sounds like the explosion of a grenade,
Anger feels like a broken gushing nose.
Anger looks like a nuclear war field,
Anger tastes like a cut lip.
Anger smells like smoke burning from a toxic factory,
Anger is blood red.

I really like the way you visit each of the senses here,
in order to get at the truth of that abstract word "anger".
The details are very well chosen and appropriate.
Joan McGavin

George Jowett
Year 7
Commended



Poems from Images

The waves crash against the jagged rocks,
Sharp splints on the half rotten palm trees thrust
out,
The grey mist sky cries out danger!!

The ripped red flag warns you as the ferocious sea
tears it to pieces,
The waves are as violent as a machine gun,
Throwing the salty water up in to your face,
The bitter taste will almost kill your taste buds.

The metaphors and similes here are good enough to draw
a reader into the poem. They made me want to read on to
see what other interesting thoughts you would present me with.
Well done.

Lizzie Gray
Year 7
Commended

Joan McGavin

My Brother

He is a dusty old lamp that refuses to work;

He is an evil blender crushing the lives and dreams of fruit and veg;

He is a drizzly, cloudy day blocking out his nemesis the sun.

He is a stale old dull bottle of water;

He is a vine plant that climbs up your wall and annoys the life out of you.

He is a pair of faded blue mucky jeans that have not been touched or washed in years and years;

He dies sitting on the sofa and starvation takes over his body as he falls to the floor.

The musky old scent of the rug is released once more from the impact of his limp body landing...



I suppose you are allowed to use these rather pejorative metaphors, being his sister! You convey a lot about him (or a lot of what you think about him) indirectly - which is often how good poems work - making the reader think what is being said. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Katie Ware
Year 7
Commended

Haiku's

Playtime

Children swinging high,
Happy, smiling, excited,
Suddenly, snap, crash!!

Desert

Dusty, desert wind,
Camels riding away – free!
Sun hot really bright.

Snow Storm

Windy whistling,
Snow settling, softly, gently,
White, white everywhere.

The Beach

Sandy blustery,
Sea salt stinging, blisters blue,
Beautiful fish live.

I've considered these as a group. You've really
Mastered this syllabic form – managing to convey a whole
Narrative compressed into each one. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Ralph Sweetman
Year 7
Commended

The Big Freeze Cinquains

Gone the Wrong Way!

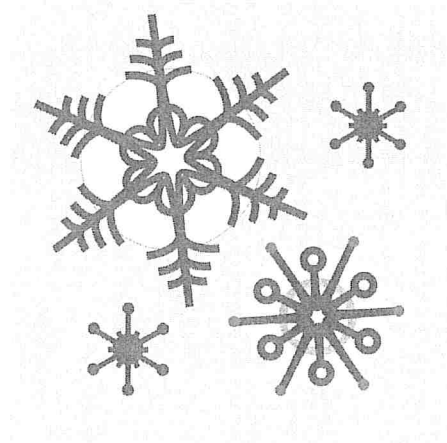
Wrong way
Wheels are spinning
Slipping sliding downwards
Getting lots of grit from boxes
The hill!

Igloo Wall

Snow wall
Kicking it down
Snowball fight with Year Eights
CRASH, BANG, BOOM and the igloo went down
OH NO!

School is Closed

No one
Empty classes
Windows wet and frozen
Sun comes out, melts all the white snow
Open.



You've mastered this quite tricky syllabic form well.
The idea of a chain of Cinquains, linked by subject
matter, is an interesting one – and you say a lot/convey
a lot in a small space.

Joan McGavin

Oliver Stone
Year 7
Commended

The Soldier's War

The high-pitched shriek of the injured,
The thud as they hit the ground,
The explosion of a bomb was a terrifying sound,
And still I kept dodging, running, jumping,
Gun in hand,
Finger on trigger,
I aimed by gun at a German figure,
My finger yanked the gun and the bullet found its mark,
Plunging itself deeply into the old German's heart,
But he had not been slow either,
And even though he bled,
His finger pulled the trigger and I fell back, dead.
Now I lay here silent and still,
I yearn to see my family but I am sure I never will,
For I am a corpse in a grave,
And to my country I was a slave,
Forced to work,
Forced to fight,
Thinking I would return home alright,
And now I lay here silent and still,
I yearn to see my family but I am sure I never will.

The idea of a voice speaking from beyond the grave is an interesting one – though you keep back that piece of information until late in the poem – a device that works well. The choice of details that make up your narrative is effective and convincing.

Joan McGavin

Maisie Chapman

Year 7

Commended



The Two-Sided War

War is a death sentence,
We're coming back with a vengeance,
It'll tear apart your life,
War gives you pride, gives you a wife,
It picks you up, like an eagle and throws you about.
In our army feel free to scream and shout,
Who'd want to fight in the cold dead of night,
You won't die, well You might,
The army treats you like a slave.
Each day we give you time to shave,
They don't let you do what you want to,
Did we not mention, your country needs you,
War chews you up and spits you out,
Go the pub, have a good time out and about,
The war must come to an end,
We must drive those Germans round the bend.

Is this the life you want?

A good idea, well carried through. The counterpoint of
The two voices works very well. Your last line 'clinches'
the argument, too. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Annabel Skinner
Year 7
Commended

Hung Parliament

Held
Under
National
Grip

Príminster
And the
Rest
Lay awake
In their beds
Always thinking
My country needs me
Eager but
Never knowing
The result

This is fun, inventive and witty. I loved the way you used phonic spelling for "Priminister"! And of course there are interesting ambiguities here – over whose life exactly is being depicted. Well done for trying an acronymic poem.

Joan McGavin

Roxanne Cooper
Year 7
Commended

A Martian Sends a Postcard Home

Rain is when the world gets upset and all is grey,
it cries and cries, trying to wash away bad memories.
Then peace is restored with a simple ray of light.

In homes there are mechanical boxes
where memories can be re-lived
that have been forgotten in time.
A click of a button and all is lost.
Generations will explore what can
never be explained.

Ruffs come in many shapes, sizes and colours.
Are loved by many and best friends for some.
Shut down their body machines many times a day
And then refuel when they have rebooted.
I have never seen one work, but they are known
For their cleaning skills.

When the siren starts, humans simply groan,
turning their back on the warning signal.
Then they become infuriated at their
idleness and the process starts again.

When the colours are resting,
many lights appear outside.
They dance and shine in the sky,
but no-one can see their magnificence.

Although I found the third stanza less immediately accessible than the others, overall the quality of imagination here, and your ability to use Craig Raine's approach, is impressive. The language is sophisticated. It made me think – which is one of the things poems – good ones – are meant to do. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Joanna Holmes
Year 8
First Place

The Puffin

He shivers on his cliff top perch
His siblings have already unwillingly jumped
Or stumbled, tripped, been pushed?
Now it's his turn.

Scared, he witnesses from both sides of him, above, below
Others reluctantly falling, dropping like pebbles, straight down.
Peacefully, their eyes shut, wings spread
Down
Down
D
O
W
N
And ...plop.

They surface, their heads bobbing up like buoys on a breezy summer's day,
They look around, dazed – their first steps from their warm, cosy nests
tucked away up high and safe,
in the soft chalky cliff-face where he watches from now.
In some eyes it's an adventure, in others an experience they'd rather not have
had.

But now *his* time has come,
His mother nudges him gently, urging him to go.
She offers him up to fate and the cruel, lonely world outside his safe home.
He knows he must go.

He turns to say goodbye for the last time,
But a gust of wind takes him –
And he is gone.



I liked the way this took me through the narrative of the puffin chick's 'baptism' so carefully and with such precise selection of details. The ending – though predictable in terms of subject-matter – nevertheless acted as a strong reminder of the effect random things can have on birds' (and animals and our) lives. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Rory Farrell
Year 8
Second Place

Badger Rap

Hi, I'm a badger and my name is Pete
I live in the ground underneath yo feet
If you leave out berries I'll eat em all
I'm as swift as an eagle, though rather small
I'm the furry little guy stealin' all your food
Some cheese, some celery if I'm in da mood
Then I sneak away to my family
And I have a big feast on yo celery.

Yeah, I'm a badger, of the cutest kind
We live in Britain most of the time
But at night we come out and we party hard
Year, we'll have a rave underneath yo yard
'Sup, Mr Owl, What's the fuss?
We're making too much noise? Are you sure that's us?
We're just trying to have the greatest time
And bust out some of our badger rhyme
Yeah, Owls, they think they're best
But we badgers have got them beat.
We've got the rhythm, you can't deny
We badgers are the coolest guys.
But the sun's coming up, so we'll say goodbye
Later, haters, it's time to fly.
Tomorrow night will come real soon
So be in da garden by afternoon.



What a good idea for a rap poem! Your badger – or baby badger? - does a very good PR job for himself. This is enjoyable to read/hear while at the same time making the reader/listener think about the nature of badgers.

JoanMcGavin

Devin Thomas
Year 8
Third Place

He is ...

He is a black eerie coffin
A blood drenched knife
A thunderous storm on a harsh night
A murky crystal glass of crimson blood
A red barbed rose
A blood stained cape
A tragic accident on a cobbled Transylvanian road
A dead willow swaying in the gloomy ambience of the dark night
The moon hidden behind the misty clouds like a silent ghost is his
favourite time of the day
When he fades away, he will be remembered for the terror he struck
into the hearts of terrified children.



The way you list the Dracula/vampire metaphors here works
very well. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Dempsey Samways
Year 8
Commended

THROUGH THE TREES...

Perky pigeons, soaring swallows,
A cheery chaffinch and firecrest follows.
Thrushes thread themselves through the trees,
Weaving woodpeckers brush the barky knees
Of the willow trees whose branches bow before them,
Until unknown predators suddenly see them.

Raging ravens and cawing crows,
All form together in military rows.
Fast falcons and rampant red kites,
All prepare for their fast, furious flights.
Pursuing, chasing, descending on their small prey,
An eerie silence prevails on the huge array.

Then a bang, reverberates through
And breaks the silence, for like a screw
A lightning bolt strikes through the trees,
And all birds in the great forest freeze.
Suddenly realising the danger they're all in,
Panic arises like smoke, scared out of their skin.

Sprint for shelter, fast as they can,
The thunder rumbles like a hungry man.
Flash, crash, hearts thumping, wings flapping,
Lightning strikes again, branches all snapping.
Food forgotten, heading for home, swerve 'round the bend,
The spindly hand chasing, will this torture ever end?

Well done. There's a good control of language here and well,
shaped stanzas and rhyme that links together key words or ideas.
It kept me reading to find out what was going to happen to the birds.

Joan McGavin

Sam Ogilvie
Year 8
Commended

My Poem

The blazing sun rays burning the dried-out crops.
The buildings fading into the background.
It's a boiling day in the village.
Kids cycling down the scorching roads towards
The little village.
To the people living there, it's just an ordinary day.
Most of the locals are outside gardening, walking
their dogs or cycling.
I stroll towards my old house.
Distant memories from the past resurface as I approach it.
Then I see an old cat, it has scars all over its body, it has grey tatty fur
and part of its tail is missing.
As the cat limps towards me, I realise that he was my first pet.

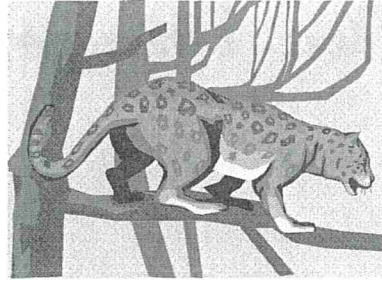


You evoke a sense of place very well in a few short lines.
There is a real sense of nostalgia. Well selected details.

Joan McGavin

Norbert Pasztor
Year 8
Commended

The Leopard



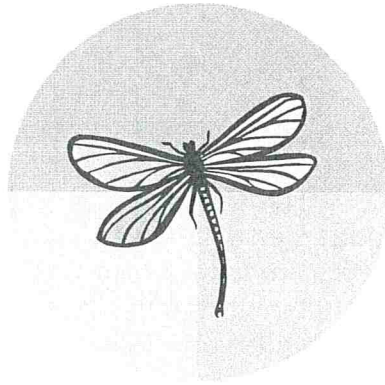
I crouch in the long grass
My sleek, patterned coat hiding me in the waving stems.
My eyes are fixed on the grazing antelope,
Unaware of my presence.
My claws slide out from their furry sheath.
I inch forward slowly,
Not taking my eyes off my prey.
A twig snaps,
The antelope looks up, wary
I pause...
The antelope cannot see me.
It continues to graze.
It moves forward again, cautiously.
I pause again...
Then...
I pounce!
The antelope flees as I hit the ground and pursue,
My legs pump faster,
Faster,
I am gaining,
The antelope dodges frantically.
We are locked in a dangerous dance,
Weaving in and out,
But there the punishment for losing is death.
The antelope grows tired,
I leap...
We tumble to the ground,
The antelope kicking madly in a last fight to live,
But my jaws are locked firmly onto its hide,
It gives a last struggle,
A last breath,
And is still.
I bend over,
And reap the rewards.

The understated, indirect ending really works well here.
And in the first person approach, you help the reader imagine
What life as a leopard must be like. Good visual details.

Joan McGavin

Matthew Collins
Year 8
Commended

The Dragonfly



Delicate, dragonflies dancing
Floating, flying and following
Brilliant, beautiful and blissful
Weaving, whirling and wonderful

Glistening and gliding gracefully
Dainty, glowing and magnificent
Secretive, scared and silent
The dragonfly is special.

You've discovered, and show, how effective alliteration can be in describing something. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Rebecca Horley
Year 8
Commended

Nervousness

Butterflies in your stomach, wafting around like leaves caught in a cool breeze. Your heart beats faster and faster, as if you were blowing up a balloon. Trying to hide from the watchful gazes of teachers and classmates alike, but to no use, only to be found.

Your legs melt like butter on a warm summer day. Nervous is no simple word for what you feel. A cold sheen of sweat laces your brow, trickling down your back, cold. One grudging step after the other to the front of the room, swift robotic movements, sheer terror inside.

Your brain whispers that everything will be fine but you don't listen. Panic sets in, what if something goes wrong? Take a deep shuddering breath, as it is your last. Your hands clench and unclench as if wrapped in horrid, steel shackles. Your eyes dart around, looking for any routes of escape.

Your lips move without realization, there's no time to stop now. Everyone watching you intently, hanging on your every word. Drawn in like moths to a flame. Your speech quickens and the nervousness steps aside, as your voice vibrates around the room. A slight applause as you finish your speech.

Your nerves seem to slip away, mind numbing peace fills you like rain to a gutter. It's over, there is no more worrying, no more speeches or presentations. Teacher speaking quietly, listen intently. Soothing voices around me, congratulation ringing in the air like a toll of a bell.

I feel safe and secure, as if locked away in a vault. Yet we can never get away from our nerves, this is human nature at its best. We are the pigeon to its hawk. We may run and claw our way to safety on some days, but we will always have to be careful not to let relaxation take us in case the hawk sneaks up, grabs us. I'm nervous now.

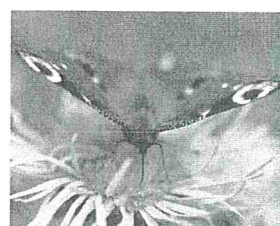
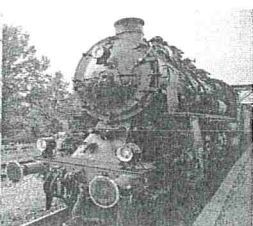
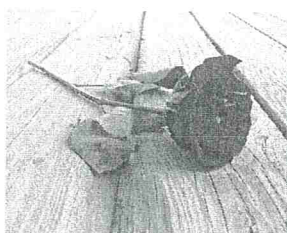
Really impressive. You use all sorts of techniques – but especially similes and metaphor – to evoke the experience/feeling in detail. Strong ending, too.

Joan McGavin

Ben Ward
Year 8
Commended

Happiness

Happiness is like ... the smell of a red rose,
The crunch of autumn leaves,
Like a tomato turning red,
Reading a book,
Like the smell of freshly baked bread.
Making snowballs and throwing them hard,
Like the sound of a steam train whistling by,
Chsha pufa, Chsha pufa as it goes on past you,
Catching butterflies in your hand,
Passing tests with great ease,
And horses running around a field.

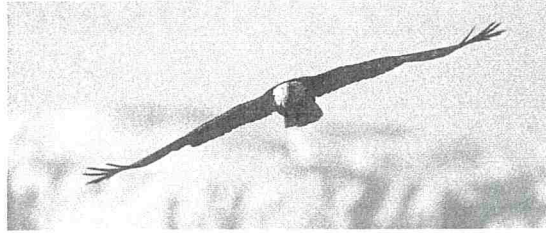


There's a set of strong similes here – showing how precisely chosen detail really works in such a poem, with such a subject. I liked the ending especially – where you broaden the poem out from something strictly personal.

Joan McGavin

Amy Clarke
Year 8
Commended

My feathered Grace



My feathered grace
Leap to me with diversity and elegance that only you should show,
Take your songs from the far mountains
Of heaven above,
And bring them down to me.

My feathered grace,
The bold strength in your lion like stride,
Looks into my soul
And grasps my heart strings
And plays the softest melody in the world.

My feathered grace,
The chestnut brown of your wild feathers,
Changes the colour of the sky when you fly,
From vibrant blue to rusty brown,
It's almost as touching as the sharpness of your beak.

My feathered grace,
Your talons take my breath away,
With every swoop you dive,
Your ballerina precision
Sends me swirling into the very air in which you fly.

My feathered grace,
You are my eagle.

You are my feathered grace.

The way you address the mysterious “feathered grace” and gradually reveal who or what it is your feel so close to, or impressed by, is effective. It’s a different ‘take’ on the eagle – a bird usually associated with cruelty/a predatory nature.

Joan McGavin

Subrena Chhatwal
Year 8
Commended

'Recipe for a Football Match'

Pre-heat the oven to 180 degrees C
Then take some old and take some young,
And mix them with some hooligans,
Then mix the cheers and the boos in slowly,
To ensure that they blend well,
Crush the players, the superstars,
In their very expensive cars,
Then add,
Throw in the Referee,
And stir vigorously while pouring in a type of weather,
E.g. a thunderstorm, a cloudy day,
Or even a sunny day of May,
Bake for 20 minutes,
Sprinkle on some bad decisions for the ref,
And add a couple of goals,
Leave to cool until half time,
And serve in Wembley stadium for a bit of grandeur,
Enjoy.

WARNING if there are too many bad decisions made by the ref the fans will
run riot and ruin the dish.

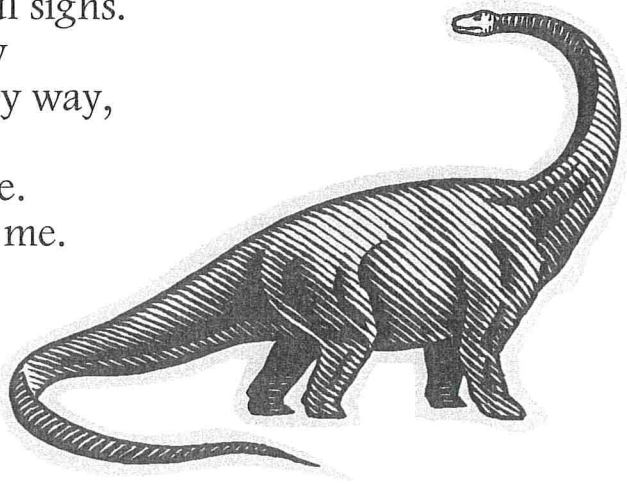
Well done. You've used the recipe formula and language
to really good effect here – the instructions or imperatives.
There's humour and a lightness of touch.

Joan McGavin

Jonathan Burridge
Year 8
Commended

The Lonely Diplodocus

I plod along on my empty path,
Loneliness wraps around me
Like a tightening scarf.
Will my dusty road ever end?
The truth is clear, I need a friend.
My heavy soul needs lifting high,
I start each day with wistful sighs.
I hate my size, I have to say
Because they tease me every way,
I don't care you see,
What shape or size they are.
If only I could be loved for me.



That simile in the third line is masterful! The way you use first person pronouns really made me empathise with the diplodocus – whose name, of course, does make him/her sound like a plodding dinosaur.

Joan McGavin

Emily Robson
Year 8
Commended



Everywhere I look all I find is sadness
What's wrong with the world its turning into madness
I look to my left, I look to my right
I can hardly believe this world used to be bright

Once this world used to be such a good sight
But nowadays no one can live without putting up a fight
Fight with anything as long as it involves money
That's why the world has gone so funny

Now look at this place which cries tears of a child
All the green is gone what happened to the friggin wild
Terrorism is becoming issue everyday
Jesus can't save you no matter how much you pray

So I started trying to search for the right path
Where every little mistake won't turn into a bloodbath
And where you won't get corrupted from making some ca\$h
Where you won't get treated like a piece of trash

Then there is the governments who are basically the same
The only difference is in the name
They think they are clever but turn out too lame
So we sit back and watch them fail and say that's a shame

Now I look around trying to search for a better place
But all the place are same horrid filled with lots of rage
To me human life is just like one of those little plays.
Where if you don't perform well you get booed and thrown off stage.

And no the world is filled with rage and fears
Can't help myself but noticing all those peoples tears
All they want is just those basic human rights
And so we just ignore them thinking everything's alright

I mean how can we live knowing people out there still dying
Because of our selfish self that we are denying
And I thought god created every man equal
Then how come there is rich and how come there is poor

I just wonder if we all had equal rights
Would there be crooks in every alley and difference between black and white
Would there be people in every street who go hungry every day
Would we discriminate against people who happened to be gay?

The way you sustain this is impressive. It reads like a
rap or a performance poem, with the rhyme propelling it forward.

Joan McGavin

Toasin Ashraf
Year 8
Commended

The Soldier

The sky was a deathly blanket,
Smothering the soldiers beneath,
The barbed wire was a ravenous wolf,
Crushing them in its teeth,
The mud was a toxic slime,
Placing them at death's door,
But still the soldiers came marching,
Marching,
Marching,
Still the soldiers came marching,
Across the desolate moor.

He'd a tilted helmet on his forehead,
A bullet wound in his leg,
A gun in the crook of his arm,
A cut right across his head,
His feet caught in the mud,
In which the rats did thrive,
But still in his eyes a twinkle,
His rifle butt a twinkle,
His gas mask lens a twinkle,
He was still alive.

Some say he's a war hero,
With medals on his chest,
Some say he's a drain on society,
A lazy and ignorant pest,
Some say he's a prima donna,
He isn't suffering anymore,
And some say he's still out there,
Out there,
Out there,
Some say he's still out there,
A prisoner of war.

A really strong use of rhythm and imagery which makes the point strongly. The use of repetition and refrain-like ending to each stanza is so confidently handled.

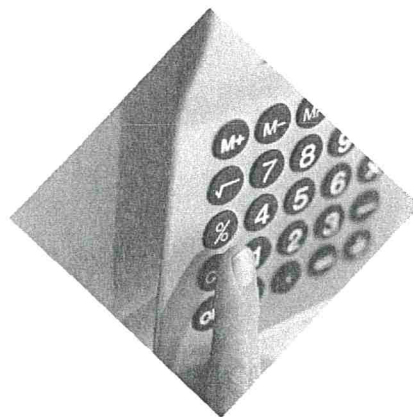
Joan McGavin

Will Haste
Year 9
First Place

Maths is everywhere and anywhere?

What time does the local bus go?
How long is the bathroom door?
How many seconds in a day?
How many miles to Spain?
How tall is that tree?
What are three times two?
What percentage of time do I sleep?
How tall am I?
How far does lightening travel?
How far is it to school?
What is 347 divided by 7?
And how many minutes in a year?
What is the volume of the frog in the garden?
What is the area of the earth?
How far to the Milky Way?

There is only one answer for this all,
Maths, maths know it all.



I loved the tongue-in-cheek tone of this. It prompts a smile, while making a serious point about the power and use of maths. The battery of rhetorical questions carries the poem along, keeps the pace going.

Joan McGavin

George Ward
Year 9
Second Place

War Poem

Soldiers,
Pour and disperse onto the
parched desert ground,
As slickly as water spills out of a
glass.
A veil of dust and debris rises from the
ferocity of the blades,
Acting as a breakable barrier,
That conceals, but does not protect, them,
From the bite of snarling snakes,
That pierces the skin and spreads its crimson venom,
Creating a carpet of flesh and bone.



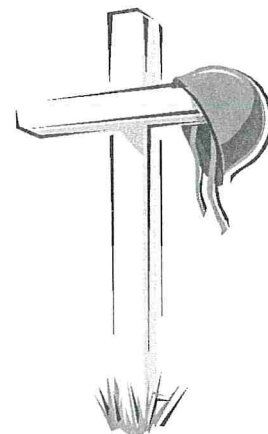
I,
Casually flick open a page of black and white,
Startle myself with the mere words,
Allow myself a few moments to imagine the pain and suffering.
The pain and suffering these words cannot express,
But these moments die as quickly as they came,
Not leaving a scar of remorse but a small dislike for potent figures,
Who treat these soldiers as simple pawns in a chess game:
Countless, replaceable, insignificant pawns.

There are some very strong things here – for instance that first alliterative comparison of soldiers to water spilling from a glass, or the metaphorical ‘carpet’ of flesh and bone. And the piling up of adjectives in the last line makes the point succinctly. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Karan Chadda
Year 9
Third Place

The Cowering Fearless



And as I walked amongst the stark white crosses,
I thought of the world that their eyes last saw
Land so parched and barren
And riveted with cracks and crevices
As the pages of a discarded book
As the grass grows wild in the meadows of silence.

The sun beat down over hunched khaki backs
Cowering yet fearless as the bullets rained down
Like snow, like hail – like England, like home
They were scuttling ants, scampering beetles
Black helmets glinting and glistening in the sun.

We all saw the funeral – stumbling coffin-bearers
Mumbling priests and sobbing family
Their young faces were etched with fear
And eyes scrunched against the inevitable
The cowering yet fearless fallen.

I very much like the way this begins in the middle of something ('in media res') with "And as..." There's a real control of language here. The repetition of the 'like' similes in the second stanza is particularly effective.

Joan McGavin

Sophie Robinson
Year 9
Commended

Recipe for Disaster

Get some Germans
Get some Brits
Squeeze in a bunker
Until one submits.

Stir in Russia
In the centre make a trench
Sprinkle on some troops
Preferably French.

Pour in some planes
And some anti-air guns
Peel the armoured tanks
Now we're almost done.

Turn the heat up
Then simmer for a bit
Don't forget the Americans
And the first aid kits.

Blend in the Germans
Chop up the Brits
Boil all the ingredients together
That's a potent mix!

You use the recipe, instruction/imperative format very effectively here. The ending with its rather tongue-in-cheek tone is strong.

Joan McGavin

Matthew Arnold
Year 9
Commended

Motocross is Life



Every life has a starting gate

Everyone is just waiting for that 30 second board to go down and for the gate to drop, hoping that we get the whole shot

We have our rhythm sections, that are pretty tough to go through, and sometimes we just pass them by

We have our ups and downs, such as the uphill and downhill jumps

Sometimes you crash and don't get up, but you must try to get up and recover the race

In this race you're always trying to beat everyone and trying to get to the top, and when the time comes, and you do things right, you win!

And when you don't win, sometimes you just have to start another race, maybe rebuild your bike better or have a better strategy to win

Your pit crew and the people around you try to support you and take care of you, but sometimes you have to take matters into your own hands, and do it for yourself.

But when it comes down to the end, it's how you finish, how much effort you put into it, how much time you're willing to go through, how badly you want it all

Just like life

You work through the analogy very effectively. I learned a lot – entertainingly – about motocross, and found myself nodding in agreement, often with what this says about life.

Joan McGavin

Jake West
Year 9
Commended

Names

Snuggling down in soft, cosy velvet,
the warmth of home and safety,
the comfort of hard floor and cushions,
images drown my senses
trapped forever, cursing over and over.

Slowly, the beautiful painting on my mahogany wall
deteriorates as thousands of innocent faces invade.
I can just make out chiselled names,
many brothers, fathers, sons and uncles
Arthur, Alec, Andrew, Adam....

Through the window, a beast of torture, deathly rotors and
brave men flowing out on to the desolate carpet
like fish fleeing in confusion from an evil predator.
Stinging sand, whipping and biting
Ben, Bert, Billy, Brian...

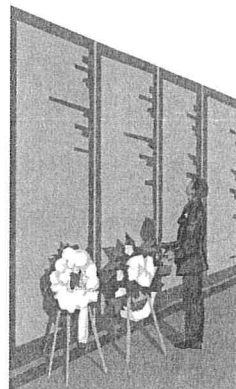
A sudden blast brings realisation,
piercing screams
bloodcurdling shouts
and men dropping, limp, lifeless to the ground
Carl, Cameron, Cuthbert, Campbell...

Mire engulfing feet and legs,
arms frantically waving for help.
rats crawling, scavenging, scraping,
spreading disease
Derek, Dominic, David, Dan...

Surrounding the nightmare-barbed wire,
worse than a prison
a metallic smell of blood and gun
a blanket of grey obscurity
Eric, Edward, Elliot, Edmund...

Soft cozy velvet,
Help me remember and help me
Forget.

It's an interesting idea, and you work through it well.
Everyone is so used to hearing 'rolls of honour' of the
dead from past wars and you manage to make us
newly aware of the horror of the deaths of so many
individuals.
Joan McGavin



Summer Colling
Year 9
Commended

Statement of Intent

*I'm writing these verses for a strong reason,
Back home in Kenya it's pure treason.*

*I hear mothers crying,
Children dying
And Presidents lying.*

*Corruption is the killer, it makes you a cripple
Someone needs to be a pebble in a pond and make it
ripple.*

*All I see is a country that is cracked,
Innocent families getting attacked.*

You use rhyme well – to link key words/ideas.
There's a strength and directness here.
That pebble metaphor in the second stanza is good. In
effect, that's what your poem is.

Joan McGavin

Connor Daniel
Year 9
Commended

The Beast

Silence descended upon the crowd
He tripped up onto the stage
The fear and dread followed closely behind
With a beast in a rattling cage.

His eyes were drawn to the ribbon of faces
All locked on his trembling frame
They melted together as the cheering began
And as one they roared out his name.

He forced a smile at the lack of control
It faded as fast as appeared
For how could he smile when the fuming beast's face
Lit up sadistic, and sneered.

He could feel his sword in his clenching fist
Gilded with glittering jewels
But he had not time to admire its beauty
Whilst there sat a brute so cruel

Apprehension gathered like a knot in his chest
An understanding of his fate
But he lifted his head and crumpled his brow
For he knew it was far too late.

The cheering stopped and his breathing slowed
For he knew this was where he belonged
He stumbled forwards to meet his fears
And began to sing his song.

An interesting narrative poem – which could be read literally, or as a metaphor where “the beast” = our deep-seated fears, or something we dread. The ending is really strong, pushing the metaphor forward, perhaps.

Joan McGavin

Kate MacDonald
Year 9
Commended

Recipe of a Piece of Music



*Dice some notes to make them easier to chew,
Slice the Italian terms.*

*Add this mixture to a scorching pan full of
accompaniment,*

Season with fluidity and vibrato,

*Let it simmer for 10 minutes whilst it repeats the
process.*

*To make some contrast, add in some full dynamics:
don't be afraid,*

Finish by serving with a smile and a bow.

You use the recipe format – with its imperatives/instructions – to good effect. The ending is concise and puts a strong visual image in the reader's (or this reader's) head.

Joan McGavin

Jess Craig
Year 9
Commended

My Poem

My poem delights me.
My poem is mine.

It is like fresh bread
When I bake it myself.

It is like my son
The day he was born.

I laughed as I wrote it,
And clapped my hands.

I will stop a stranger
To show him my poem.

Because it delights me.
Because it is mine.

Lovely! This is so direct – and the first person approach works so well here. It made me think of some John Clare poems I've read – and some William Blake. The similes and repetition enliven it.

Joan McGavin

Scott Sugden
Year 9
Commended

The Beach

The waves whisper to me, calling me to the soft sand.
The water sweeps over my feet, surrounds where I stand.

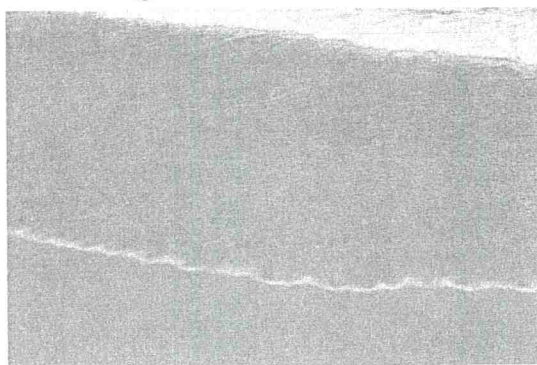
The breeze caresses my face, whips my hair.
The wind encloses my body, acknowledging I'm there.

The clouds clotting out the sun, turning grey with anger.
The sky no longer blue, a clear warning of danger.

The rain pelting my skin, as cold as ice.
The water seeping in my bones, undeniably concise.

The world calling to me, pulling me out.
The atmosphere thicker, it's my sorrow no doubt.

The waves grew higher, crashed over my head.
The breath blown away, unmistakably dead.



This is rather spooky. There seems to be a whole second narrative going on alongside what's on the page – to do with suicide, it seems. I liked the way the tense of the verb changes in that last stanza – with the effect of keeping the reader guessing as to what is happening or has happened.

Joan McGavin

Paige Dunning
Year 9
Commended

Just another Soldier



A father, a brother, a husband, a friend.
Just another ant with an unfortunate end.

A brother, a widow, a mother, a child,
Just another loss written out and filed.

A bearer, a crowd, priest, a war,
Just another funeral like all the ones before.

A crunch, a grunt, a heave, a hole,
Just another military base filled with a dead soul.

A grave, a grave, a grave, a grave,
Just another collection of soldier slaves.

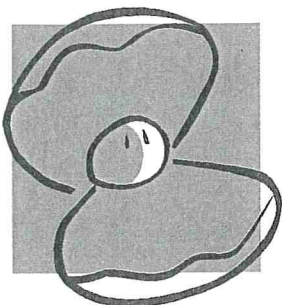
To you sitting with your evening booze
I'm just another name appearing on the news
You have no way of knowing what it's like in my shoes.
I'm just another soldier.

A really strong use of rhythm and imagery which makes the point strongly. The use of repetition and refrain-like ending to each stanza is so confidently handled.

Joan McGavin

Emily Spottiswoode
Year 9
Commended

The Story of the Little Blue Clam



The little blue clam isn't blue on the outside,
But inside he's as blue as the skies,
All day he will speak of the changes he'll make,
With enthusiasm he spreads all his lies.

He will speak of the way that he cares for the sea,
How he'll help to fit all creature's wishes.

He tells all the little oysters and all the little prawns,
That he'll help even the smallest of fishes.

But behind closed caves they snicker,
The little blue clam and his friends,
The lobsters and jellyfish speak of evil things,
But whether they succeed all depends...

Should one little prawn overhear their cruel meetings,
It could mean the end for their plot,
No wealth to the big fish while the little fish cry,
And no Clam in a shiny blue yacht.

The little blue clam seems as sweet as can be,
But that Brave Little Prawn sees the lies,
He's gathering a group of muscles and oysters,
And sending them to a meeting – as spies!

When explaining the horrors they heard on their trip,
The little fish don't know where to start!
Those horrible plans are so hard to take in
For ones so little with the biggest of hearts.

"The horrible greedy creatures" one oyster explains,
"Do not mean at *all* what they say!
They want us to suffer while they're bathing in pearls!
How *do* we stop them getting their way?"

"I have a wish", says the Brave Little Prawn,
"And I'm certain we'll make it come true,
Us little fishies – we all will rebel,
The answer, my friends, starts with *you*."

So they stay up all night writing messages on shells,
Making friends with the cod and the trout,
So diligently they work on their speeches,
Arranging to, at last, speak out.

When the time comes to act, the very next day,
They swallow their fear with their plankton,
They go on a protest with all of their friends and,
..... Unfortunately, nothing rhymes with plankton.

I'm running out of room, so I'll now cut this short
It's not because I under-planned, honest,
Basically, in the end, the Evil Blue Clam steps down,
Leaving room for Brave Prawny the Modest.

The true colours of the blue clam are now exposed,
There is no way he can continue his scheme,
And the Brave Little Prawn now rules over the seas,
Which have gone from sea-blue to sea-green.

Take this as a lesson, my baby sea snails,
You can go tell those bullies who's boss!
One little creature can always make a difference-
Now: would you like some more seaweed and moss?

Shades of Edward Lear! Well done. It's a witty allegory – that kept me reading to see what the outcome would be. There are lots of deft touches – e.g. the "clam in a shiny blue yacht" / "writing messages on shells," etc.

Joan McGavin

Imogen Thomas
Year 10
First Place

Suicide

Silence so loud I can't hear myself think

'Ugly' they say I am, now I believe them

If I go through with this, know that it's not your fault

Cowardice, people say this is but

I never said I was a fighter

Don't be sad, I chose this, no one made me

Everything.....ends....now.....

The enjambment between 'C' and 'I' lines is very strong: the whole poem pivots on it. Acronyms can often be light/ephemeral poems. What you've done here is to use the idea in a surprisingly serious way.

Joan McGavin

Sophie Barrett
Year 10
Second Place

Prisoner to Religion

I see a tower in my path
As I walk this dead straight track
Men shout out their abuse at me
But I don't hear them anymore
They show me no compassion
So I treat them as they treat me.

Oh Lord take me please
Set me free
I am a prisoner because of you
Take me back to the promised land
Where I am free.

Stopped in my tracks
The gates are closed
And now I see guns in my face
Please shoot me, take this pain away
Take this shame away
Send me to my Lord.

Oh Lord take me please
Set me free
I am a prisoner because of you
Take me back to the promised land
Where I am free.

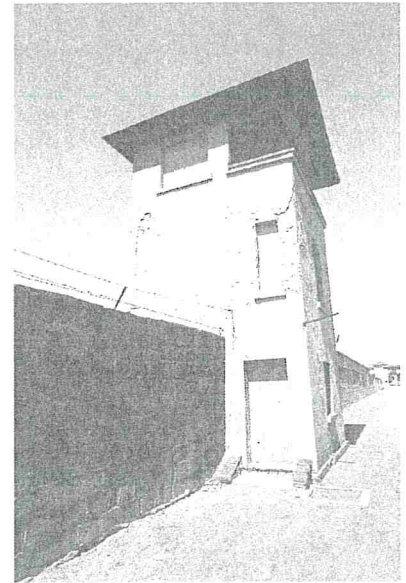
And after all these years you think I care
I am numbed; I do not fear you any more
Every day treated like an animal
I am your slave
I am a slave to my religion

So are they
Here comes the train again
More prisoners to religion
Down this straight empty track
To the watch tower.

The sick sweet perfume fills the air
One day it will be my turn
But as I grow weak I know
Soon they will come for me
Only the young and strong will ever survive

Oh Lord take me please
Set me free
I am a prisoner because of you
Take me back to the promised land
Where I am free.

The train is gone it will never return
But the ghosts of a million still linger
I never was set free I am still here
Roses are strung from barbed wire fences
We will always be remembered
But our names always forgotten
We are dead but stories and memories never die.



Well done – a sustained piece. I liked the way you don't indicate what the situation/religion is until well into the poem - when you mention "watch tower" and the "perfume" of the gas chamber.

Joan McGavin

Beth Overton-Hore
Year 10
Third Place

Running

Faster, further, just one more step
Is that meant to be my motivation?
I can hear the desperate panting of my chasers
The people I'm meant to hate.

Faster, further, just one more step
Circling as each second passes
With each step I struggle
Is a second really that valuable?

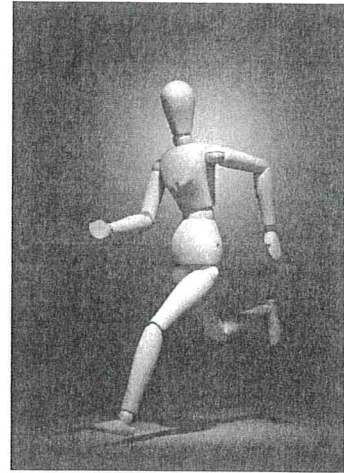
Faster, further, just one more step
Relief rushes through my body
As I hear it's almost over
Footsteps get quicker.

Faster, further just one more step
I can see the end
My heart is racing
No one can catch me.

Faster, further just one more stop
I'm over the line
Medal in hand
The race is mine.

I very much like the way this works – how you don't reveal
the exact situation (a competitive race) until the very end,
but keep the possibility of a menacing chase open til then
That's a good ploy to keep people reading.

Joan McGavin



Nicky Taylor
Year 10
Commended

The Day

We were
And now we are not
The spaces that you left,
I will fill with insincere paragraphs
And enchanting reassurance,
In hope of making the day
That we were
Come back to life.

This is beautifully understated and controlled.
Well done. You really convey the emotions involved
indirectly – which is what good poems succeed in doing.

Joan McGavin

Ellie Jones
Year 10
Commended

Maybe, Just Maybe...

E very four years,
N ational expectation on the shoulders of 23,
G ifted to them, the shirt of St. George,
L aid upon them, an impossible target,
A iming for eternal glory
N o allowance for error
D ay: July 11

Maybe, just maybe it could be our year.

I like this variation on an acronymic poem. You suggest
the pressures of the situation sensitively. And I think you do
pull off that low-key chatty and informal last line.

Joan McGavin



Leigh Downton
Year 10
Commended

A Matter of Honour

I must hold in all my tears
Keep them locked up deep inside
Even as I limped down that aisle
To say my last goodbyes.

I couldn't let it out
She wouldn't have wanted it that way
But I didn't know what to do
When I had nothing else to say.

My life's fallen apart
Within a matter of days
And everything I have to say
Has already been said in so many ways.

I know your dying inside
But trust me, I am too
So why pretend that I don't matter?
I just want to talk to you.

You're the only one that understands
That we cannot just cease to be
We have to fight for it to pass
Because it will not consume me.

We must hold her in our memories
All the hours, even the last
Tell stories of our childhood
And conserve her in our hearts.

And I hurt as much as you do
Don't act as if I don't care
I was with her whole way too
Up until her last prayer

But we must face this ongoing darkness
Head on, standing high
It's what she would have wanted
It's time to say goodbye.

You keep the reader involved by not revealing until the sixth stanza and beyond what exactly the situation is – whose funeral it is. The first person/dialogue approach also draws the reader in. Well done.
Joan McGavin

Ellie Spink
Year 10
Commended

I Dance

*A desire within
I dance
A need so strong
Words cannot describe
I dance
I feel defeat and failure
Yet I keep going
I dance
The pounding rhythm controls my body
The music creates a new world
I dance
The body says what words cannot describe
I perform and do my best
I dance
The dance is over
The applause sustained
I do not dance because I am happy
I am happy because
I dance.*



You can get away with the lack of punctuation here because of the nature of the subject matter. The ending is strong, and the whole poem, with its repetitions, conveys your – or the speaker's joy in dancing. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Amy Fuller
Year 10
Commended

The Folly of Man

*They snatched his sweet young wife away,
His sorrow was complete that day.
He swore an oath to never slack,
And hunt them all down with his axe.
And one by one they met their doom,
Upon his travels his fame grew.
His deeds lived on though he was dead,
And thoughts of him filled young ones' heads.*

*Captain of the axe was his name,
And hunting killers brought him fame.
Artists and poets were ignored,
A cold killer they did applaud.
This is the folly of mankind,
As thoughts of violence fill our minds.
Salvation will have to be earned,
But sadly we will never learn.*

I liked the narrative element here – how your short poem suggests a whole longer story or set of events ending.
Joan McGavin

James Sealy
Year 10
Commended

Northern Rock Lobster

Clak Clak Clak Clak Clak, Clak Clak Clak Clak Clak Clak Clak, Clak Clak Clak Clak Clak

To a lobster's ear, money speaks louder than words, yet how does it speak?

Does it have a mouth, and does it enjoy lobster? Yet I'm digressing.

He can hold but coins, because paper is worthless, deep under the sea,

For it dissolves, like a biscuit in some tea, or Clegg's principles.

Lobsters like to steal, has one pick-pocketed you? It's really painful,

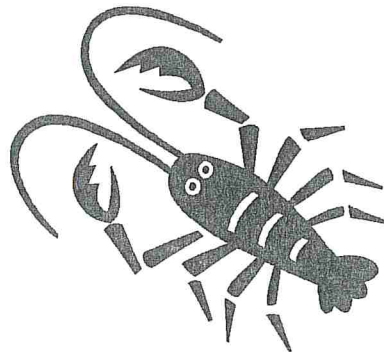
Not the loss of the wealth, but claws seriously hurt, run from the lobster.

The yellow sub stops, in octopus's garden, envious lobster

But disaster strikes, recession lobster is sad, cuttlefish must bail.

Eels watch him conspire, and learn of his sordid plans, Sterling buys their mouths

So to clarify, lobster is a metaphor, for the major banks.



This is interesting surreal – and the intriguing title suggests it's an allegory. I'm not sure if you need that tongue-in-cheek last line – a deliberate anti-climax. Perhaps you need to have the courage of your convictions and go for the metaphor, leaving the reader to do some work – something s/he might well enjoy.

Joan McGavin

Sam Pickering
Year 10
Commended

Mist



Moving effortlessly **over** the ground, ever closer – never stopping.
Dancing among barren **tree** roots, ever closer – never stopping.
Glancing along deserted **d** paths, ever closer – never stopping.
Breathing cold air **across** clearings, ever closer – never stopping.

Curing gracefully **around** your ankles, ever closer – never stopping.
Whispery hands encase **your** wrists, ever closer – never stopping.
The undeniable, inescapable chill of mist
Crawling ever closer – **never** stopping.

This works well out loud – with that slight variation and lack of repetition of the 'refrain' in the penultimate line being enough to save your poem from seeming to mechanistic. It's evocative and subtly descriptive.

Joan McGavin

Emily Fergusson
Year 10
Commended

1917-1943

*The flowers are fresh
Though it's been a long time
And the writing is no longer visible
She spent longer without him
Than she ever did with him
And it's that thought that kills her inside*

*But every day she makes the trip
Up to the top of the hill
To talk to the man who left her behind
And to tell him she'll meet him again*

*Around her neck, on a fine chain
Hangs his gold wedding ring
She'll never remove it until the day she dies
So that she can return it to him*

*No one will forget the tragic events
But there are some names that are never heard
She vowed to herself to never let go
Of the man she met, loved and lost*

*'In loving memory of a faithful husband and best friend
He will live on in the hearts that he touched
1917 - 1943'*

A sensitive topic, sensitively handled. Well done.
You tell a story/narrative through well-chosen details
and keeping that key revelation of the final details to
the end is very effective.

Joan McGavin

Ellen Jocelyn
Year 10
Commended

Fish

Fish

The silent swimmers

No worries, no cares, no school

No peers to impress,

No memories of pain,

Oh, how I envy them.

Fish

The peaceful drifters

No hate, no abuse, no envy

No need to run and hide

No crying themselves to sleep

Oh, how I envy them.

There's a slightly surreal feel to this witty poem. I like your use of a refrain and a clear structure. Well done.

Joan McGavin

Alex Hunt
Year 10
Commended

