



# VERVE

The Creative Writing Magazine

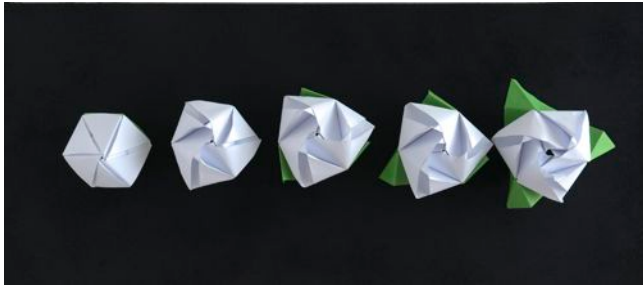
Sevenoaks School

## Editorial Haiku:

**Verve** [*noun*]. Magazine  
Uniting perspectives, styles  
And inspirations.

**Verve Team** [*noun*]. Group of  
Sympathetic minds, rifling  
Through midnight musings.

**Verve** [*verb*]. To do what  
You all have done and to just  
*Tell us about it.*



Alasdair Brenninkmeijer

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## My Life In England

Before I grew accustomed to rain as a humdrum phenomenon, an ever-present companion, topic for conversation and complaint, contempt of a morning and solace of an evening - this spittle of the gods seemed to me romantic. After a childhood passed in New York, where the hard sun cuts the hard ground, even in the dead of winter, I longed for something softer. And rain nurtures not only the living, but the dead or dormant meditations, hidden in the depths of the soul. When I first visited London, I noticed a nobility in its construction, a loftiness in those sublime rows of white houses; their benign, clear white, intended to foster a clarity and freedom of thought, unknown to American cities. American optimism does not allow for such clarity, as acceptance of vulnerability is its prerequisite. Rain, at least, reminds us of our absurdity as a species.

I arrived at my cousin Lucy's house on a rainy night in August, as summer breathed its last. The rosy glow of her aromatic front room convinced me that this house was all a house should be. Piles of bread, folded in a checked napkin, red cabbage, those lifted lives around the table.

Yet the present has somehow managed to slash its way through these soft vignettes. The present begins at Charing Cross station with a wrench, and ascends the escalator from the tube station, a humid, diseased orange, to the main hall, its ceiling open to the 8:00 sky. And then, as if a breath has been knocked from my lungs into centre space, the train moves, and the present hovers. It leers at me from the other side of the window as we pass the Houses of Parliament. It takes a seat next to me as I open my book - and all journey, I cannot read a word. Orpington arrives on the other side of the window: a town I know only from the sign at its train station, and a dry little click in my throat as we pull away. By this point, the present is sitting opposite me, blankly staring with both its hands outstretched. Disembarking at Sevenoaks, I accept a hand.

**Charlotte Day**

Lower 6th

## Myth

The world started with a short frightening strike of lightning.  
As the storm clouds gathered out of nothing,  
The lightning struck and land was formed.  
The cloud suddenly produced a rain drop  
Which grew and landed on the land creating  
Sea that surrounded the land.  
Then thunder broke out forming space.  
Finally the lightning stopped and the storm clouds turned  
White from grey and drifted around the world,  
Forming rain.

**Oliver Best**

Year 7



‘There was a boom, a crash, a thunder like  
the heavens were weeping. The sky-dreamer  
cracked open, its tears came crashing down.’  
**Holly MacAskill** Year 7

## The Creation of The Earth

Once, before the earth existed, six eggs floated in the darkness. They hatched all at the same time, and out of each flew a bird. A Green Parakeet, an Eagle, a Kingfisher, a Bluebird, a Dove, and finally a fiery Phoenix. The birds grew old together over thousands of years. On the last day of their lives, they decided to form a new world, to which each would give a gift, in memory of himself. The Green Parakeet shed his feather, and as it fell, it opened out into a circle - the earth. Then the Parakeet fell to his death. The Eagle ascended as high as he could go, then darted down towards the earth. As he hit the ground his beak made a hole, and on either side of him mountains were raised. He exploded into dust. Then the Kingfisher hovered above the hole the eagle had made in the ground and shed a tear, creating the sea.

After that, the Kingfisher drowned in the salt water. When the Kingfisher had died, the Bluebird flew above the earth, and before he took his last breath, he wrapped his sapphire blue wings around the earth to create the sky. In the sky, the dove exhaled tiny breaths which made the clouds, and sang his last eternal song, which we hear when the wind whistles. Finally, the Phoenix floated above the ground and spun around, making fire bolts fly around the earth. Some landed in the mountains creating volcanoes. The Phoenix then flew towards the volcanoes and turned to ash.

**Amelia Bell**

Year 7



Aisha Bennett

## Winter

Settling snow falls silently,  
Incessantly dancing down and down:  
An icy heaven forming rapidly,  
Frosty vapour veiling, blurring our sight.  
Winter's on its way!

A skein of geese move south,  
Robins dart from skeletal trees.  
Fish interned in their crystal prison,  
Sparkling spears dangling from snow carpeted roofs.  
Winter's here to stay!

### Oscar Gordon-Reid

Year 7

'Snow  
A powerful swipe of silence and stillness  
A symbol of absolute peace.'

### Lou Warnett

Year 7

'Snow  
Drifting with the wind  
Carrying the frosty sky around the world.'

**Edward Hayes** Year 9

‘A dying star’s last glint and the first signs of spring.’  
**Phoebe Osler** Year 8

## Spring

Frost covered mornings  
Smoky skies  
Blossoms are blooming  
Old feelings die

Light overcomes  
But dark still lingers  
A reminder of you  
The touch of your fingers

You came to me once  
Like a perfect day  
Now feel the emotion  
Of it all gone away

Frost covered mornings  
Smoky skies  
Blossoms are blooming  
Old feelings die

**Alice Grishkov**  
Year 9



**Zara Smith**

## **The Lighthouse on the Edge**

Run right up to the top of the cliff,  
Head right up to the creaking lighthouse,  
Run right up in stormy weather,  
To the lighthouse on the verge of falling.

Hear the crashing of the great waves,  
Biting viciously into battered cliffs,  
See the mighty ocean surge,  
Waiting for the day when the lighthouse falls.

Come right up and climb the lighthouse,  
See the lightning flashing fire,  
Hear the groaning thunder roar,  
Feel the shake of the lighthouse falling.

Now look down to the waves below,  
Waves that will tear your heart apart,  
Feel the lighthouse topple and fall  
Over the edge where you are no more.

**Lou Warnett**  
Year 7



**Zara Smith**

## The Man Who I Thought

The man who I thought my father was,  
 Is a man willing to do anything for his family.  
 The man who I thought my father was,  
 Is kind, wants the best for others, never hurts anyone.  
 The man who I thought my father was,  
 Is not what he is right now.

The man who my father is,  
 Betrays the family, keeps things from us,  
 Important things.  
 The man who my father is,  
 Should be full to the brim with guilt.  
 The man who my father is,  
 Is not the father for me.

*Inspired by The Storm Catchers by Tim Bowler*

**Alberta Leonard**

Year 7

## A trapped secret

I took it out  
 From under the books  
 And between sheets of paper.  
 A delicate flower,  
 Preserved and treasured.  
 Tiny petals fragile as  
 A pair of gossamer wings.  
 A piece of summer,  
 Captured for ever.

**Bethany Hall** Year 10

## Through a Door

She had locked the door. I knew she was talking to him ‘cause she called him by his full name, the way she called me when I got suspended and my brother when he crashed the jeep. Some syllables would slap you with disappointment or hit you with anger; suddenly your name had sadness to it. I could tell you exactly how she was moving, even through the wooden door. How she would reassure herself somewhere between the couch and the bed, and the bed and the TV, that she was in control. She wasn’t just loud, she was screaming, and I couldn’t just hear her, I could feel her. The pain was unbearable. Outside I didn’t know if I should stand or sit, as I walked up and down the hallway. I felt her ripping at her hair and biting her lips. I felt the weight in her chest and confusion at her feet. It wasn’t her words, her *feelings* felt louder. For the first time I felt her anger, her pain, and I was afraid.

**Adesuwa Giwa-Osagie**

Upper 6th



Sophia Connelly

## Sadness

You slide down her cheek  
 Silent like the dead  
 You drop to the ground  
 Falling like a feather.

You fill the rivers, seas and oceans  
 You flood the land  
 You steal our hearts washing  
 Happiness away.

**Charlotte Coxon**

Year 8

**Adagio**

Sh! Make quiet!  
Do not disturb  
The little flower while it sleeps.

Walk on tiptoes  
Watch it open  
One petal at a time, in an adagio.  
Wise shell of shyness,  
Hear her mellifluous breath  
And smell her whispering scent.

Stand still in reverence as she  
Opens her heart to you  
Not expecting you to do it too  
And calmly, without hurry  
Wrap yourself in a shell  
Of silky petals and whispering smell.

**Vinicius Bremer**

Lower 6th

‘Turning the dial, tuning the radio,  
Till the songs smoothly sound over silence.’

**Adesuwa Giwa-Osagie**

Upper 6th

‘Love is a symphony  
A song played by all.’

**Alice Grishkov**

Year 9

‘Music moves my tears to dry,  
A memory left of pieces.’

**Yimika Awolowo**

Lower 6th

## **Careers Interview**

Stepping into a clean corridor,  
The white walls and ceiling gleaming,  
Pain at my temple. Doors stretch  
Endlessly; I begin to walk.

My heels are only hollow echoes,  
Murmurs from whitewashed walls.  
Bag aching on my back, the handles  
Burrowing into  
Muscle.

A windowed door, I see  
Faces nodding in gridlines,  
Intently gazing, so sure of themselves.  
I wait.

I am pinned. Opposite sits a  
Green threadlike creature.  
The threads of his legs are bent,  
Poised. Antennae rub, nodding;  
So sure of himself. He knows  
What's best, where I shall be put.

This panic is a fear I cannot see; it  
Takes no sharp-edged picture in my mind.  
It is a blank fear, like the whitest wall;  
A fear of possibilities,  
Of what will be closed and what will stay,  
Of where I will be channelled, like a fish in a dark pipe.

**Alix Abrahams**

Lower 6th

### **An extract from ‘I Heard a Scream’**

I heard a scream as I crashed head-first into the concrete slab, only to realise it was my own. My vision was blurry, as if a white film had been placed over my pupils. I tried to get up, but as I moved, a weak moan escaped my mouth. Then it was dark.

I heard a shuffling sound from the other side of the room and I whipped around, listening tentatively. I could see an eye staring at me out of the shadow of the darkest corner of the room. It blinked. I staggered back and wrenched open the door. My hands were shaking uncontrollably as I shut it behind me, twisting the key to lock whatever it was that was in there in. Then the key fell out of my hand, and the door creaked open. Suddenly, I felt a weight dragging me down. There were two gnarled, charcoal-black hands around my ankles. I tried to scream for help, but I couldn't. I was choking on something; it was blocking my throat, preventing me from breathing. Drawing in a stuttered gasp, I closed my eyes and embraced my destiny.

**Julia Morris**

Year 7

### **An extract from ‘Grapevines’**

The voice was dreamy, floaty, innocent. But the words were a threat. A menace. Haunting. She stood, utterly shocked, staring at the phone. Then she summed up all her courage and raised her mouth to the phone. “What are you talking about?” She tried to sound as calm as possible. There was silence. “Don't lie to me girl. I know who you are. I know you saw me through the eyepiece. I know things you don't know. Now be a good little girl, open the door, and come with me.” The phone went dead.

**Catherine Brown**

Year 7

## Waiting

I could feel the glass pane of the window cold against my face. My legs were growing stiff and numb, but still, I waited. I uttered a silent prayer. It would be a good half an hour more, everyone had said. But I wanted to be the first to see him, to reach and feel the soft stubble on his cheek, to feel his arms around me - to know he was real.

He was a brave one, my Pa - at least, that's what everyone was always telling me. When War was declared, the courage and bravery of men made him leave us.

Ma cried when he left, and begged him not to go; prayed to the Lord. But he did anyway. Said he had to. Said it was his Duty.

Gradually, I could hear voices, getting louder as the men moved closer to us. Soon the voices morphed into faces. Some were singing hymns. Then I saw the man at the front of crowd. He was striding down the road, whistling and laughing - the very picture of joy. In shape and stature, from a distance, he might have been my own Pa, but he stopped at the house opposite and eager arms pulled him inside.

After that, they came by the dozen: hands in pockets, smoking their tobacco, whistling, singing 'Men of Harlech', all smiling. They were met by their women and children, silently thanking God for their safe return.

Soon the stream of returning men had dwindled to a stop. But still no Pa.

I was just about to turn away from the window when I saw the last uniformed man striding down the road. I settled myself down to watch as he walked up to our door and rang the bell. My mother yanked the door open eagerly, aeons of tortured waiting displayed openly on her taught face; but as she took in the man's appearance her face fell. The distant hum of voices enveloped me. The waiting seemed to last an eternity. Then he fished about in his pocket and handed something to my mother. He bid her goodbye, then turned and left.

The minutes passed. The road had embraced its returning heroes; smuggled them back into their families. Panic snatched at my insides like a crab grabbing its meal. A persistent roaring filled my ears, curling me up in a ball, hands over my ears to block out the noise. Tears welled up but refused to come; the inexpressible void stretched instantly in front of me.

Cold and remote, my body took me down the steep stairs. The echo of my feet marked my movement. Inside the kitchen Ma had merged with the Bible, all wet and leathery in her grasp. For once I could not touch her nor feel her pain.

**Niamh Meyer**  
Year 7



Michelle Lin

## Paper Memory

I saw that first faded picture of  
You  
Holding me  
Today. I fit into one of your hands.  
I remember nothing of that day, when  
You smiled  
At my scrunched up face,  
Laughed  
When I grabbed your finger  
Tightly in my toy hand.  
I wish you could see me now.

**Emily Galvin**

Year 10

## Portrait

Three things.  
Three things thrilled that girl;  
Acoustic guitar, ripe orange,  
And salt water on her skin.  
She reviled the tears of her friends,  
America,  
And girlish jealousy.  
And she was tied to no one.

**Zoe Dawson**

Year 10



**Jessie Sullivan**

## **My Torch**

I flick

A small switch,  
Waiting for supersonic energy to  
Course through its veins. Lighting  
The filament and igniting the fire  
That burns through its heart.

Wait,

For power to set ablaze, or mirrors  
To reflect. Wait for something  
To scare away the shadows that lurk  
Inside the dark  
For me.

The light streams from its centre,  
The darkness is  
Gone.

**Tabitha Gibb**

Year 8



**Olivia Paine**

# Longevity [*noun*] continuity and durability



‘Everything was moving, but everything was still, timeless. I could imagine being there a hundred years ago, or in a hundred years’ time, and seeing the exact same sight.’

**Annabel Turnbull**

Year 10

‘The last thing I see is a traveller,  
Who watched as I closed my eyes and slept forever.’

**Deborah Allen**

Year 7

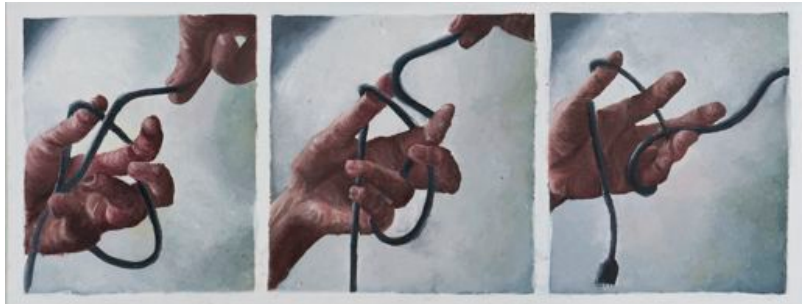
## Fossil Nautiloid

Black and cold,  
The shadow of death.  
Three moons on its back,  
Three ghostly moons.  
For what this once was,  
And what it is now.  
Only time itself can tell.

Death, a part of it,  
Frozen in time.  
A piece of life back then,  
Just a corpse now.  
Encased in a crust,  
Of the dead.  
It is death,  
Death is it.  
Always present,  
Never alive.  
The fossil of what it once was.

## Rob Boylin

Year 9



Arisa Manawapat

## An extract from ‘The Unwanted’

The creature, shielded by an aura of superficial benevolence, pounded heavily against its derelict cage. Its confident drone interjected my thoughts with spite, obstructing the transmission of electrical impulses to my mind, whilst my eyes were blinded by the grotesque white rays radiating from its muscular core.

The creature purred gently, its soft murmurs reverberated in its cage. It had been drained of energy and lethargy left its body heavy and lifeless. In preparation for my kill I had shut all the windows in the room. I had turned off the heater. I had extinguished the vivacious blaze upon the hearth. Now the room became enveloped by a still, airless pall. I could smell its sweet, pure aroma and was almost enthralled by the rays of virtue the creature emanated in its sleep. With one swift motion I thrust the blade into the core of the creature. He beat rapidly with terror, his face flushed with deep crimson. I forced the blade deeper into the creature’s body. He howled once more. Silence. I had severed the veins that bound us together. I had unhooked myself from the unwanted.

*A modern take on Edgar Allan Poe*

**Christie Mok**

Lower 6th



**Olivia Paine**

## Teddy

In the washing machine  
Round and round

Was newly white, now withered brown  
Time,  
Embedded as dirt in your polyester fluff  
That cheap stuff  
I whimper for, when lost.

Strange,  
That memories are kept in your  
Torn rag-hat and Daddy-glued-it nose.  
You crumble thread by thread, second by second  
But ever present  
Every tummy ache, headache, heartache

And that smile,  
Never erased never faded,  
You always  
Smile.

## Janice Chui

Lower 6th



Vittoria Lenzi

## **An extract from ‘Borneo’**

As dusk stripped the day of any remaining light, creatures of the night suddenly came alive. A chorus of whoops, bird calls and hundreds of thousands of insects all began to call for dominance in the orange light. The atmosphere was oppressive as I scurried back to the cabin to wash off the film of dust and dirt that had accumulated on my skin that day. At this time of night, the river was mesmerising. Violent ripples reflected light at all angles and directions as moonlight danced off the surface. The banks were a hive of activity as men cast their splintered wooden boats into the water, then waded through the filth to climb aboard. Leeches that had attached themselves were swiftly pulled off and placed into a rusty bucket, all against the backdrop of the river rhythmically lapping against the banks.

**Toby Hunt** Year 10

‘I was looking at the symbol of freedom for America;  
I felt as if I could just reach out and touch her hand.’

**Christiana Bickley** Year 10

## **An extract from ‘Kuredu Express’**

A shiver went down my spine. As I stared out into the expanse of deep blue the outline of a white tip reef shark appeared. I could make out the dagger-like fin of the gigantic creature as it slowly circled in the distance. I had waited my whole life for this moment. In eerie silence, the shark glided gracefully about the reef, suddenly changing direction every so often as if it was eyeing me up, testing my reactions. Its body was a light grey, the underside the colour of chalk. The tip of its fin was white and its beady eyes a deep black. All I could hear were my own inhalations, a gush of air into my lungs every few seconds. The silence of the underwater world only added to the occasion; I was at one with arguably the most dangerous creature in the world.

**Felix Hammett** Year 10

## An extract from ‘Come to Coyoacan’

I watched the hectic commotion as I stood as still as the air around me. Though there were many weightless clouds, the sky’s complexion was flawless. The sun kept appearing and disappearing behind the clouds like an undecided customer; tilting my head upwards I watched it play hide and seek amongst them. It was around 20 degrees; cold enough for locals to weigh themselves down in colourful knits while tourists flaunted their bodies. I had arrived feeling cold, but I soon felt the heat from the vibrant liveliness of the market. The many stalls, covered in knitted blankets, seeped reds, yellows and purples blurred my vision. The cobbled street, covered with invisible footprints of curious steps, led my own down towards a taco-selling stall. Behind it was a small man, no taller than 5’ 5” with his heavy eyes fixated on a pan viscously spitting out specks of oil.

Natalia Gonzalez-Morales Year 10



Jessie Sullivan

## Lurking in the Dark Humidity

The air was so thick, so heavy, so moist, that I was sure to be able to grab a handful of it. The foliage enveloped us in a leafy, savage, untrustworthy darkness. We would have been blind had it not been for the few pioneering rays of midday sun that pierced the obscurity. All around us, we could see what seemed like miniature, tin-roofed, open-walled shelters. In them would be pieces of broken pottery, utensils, and maybe a bundle of clothes or two. The only clue as to what they were was the occasional cross which crowned a few of them.

In this place the dead were completely catered for in their afterlife. Clothes, pots, utensils, a favourite trinket, even money, would be left for them, in the hereafter. The beautiful china pots that were the attraction for gravediggers would have been filled with rice, and families would usually give up their most beautiful vase to show respect for their deceased relative. The introduction of Christianity had started to reduce the importance of their animist customs, as did the risk of theft, but underneath it all, tradition, heritage, and tribal law still reigned in Sarawak.

As we delved deeper into the vegetation away from our small riverboat, I noticed small holes in the ground below me.

“Who lives in these?”

Our guide, a half-Chinese half-Iban man with an oversized head and a smile that seemed even larger, looked at me with a knowing smirk.

“I will tell you when we leave the jungle.”

He flashed me his signature toothy smile and wordlessly approached an oversized shoot near the edge of the path. He then expertly sliced the fibrous, emerald stem at a diagonal angle. As the knife caught the stalk’s fibres, a watery liquid slowly trickled down the metal blade. I wasn’t quite sure whether it was the humidity of our environment or the plant’s liquid protest. When his blade was dried against his trousers, Louis finally looked up at me.

“You’ll see when we come back. Ginger grows fast.”

Revelation [noun] disclosure or insight

And sure enough, as we retraced our tracks back to our boat nearly two hours later, he stopped me by the shoot. Right in the middle of the many rings that formed the stem were a few raised layers, much lighter in colour than the protecting coat of the stalk. The sliced region had grown two centimetres in almost as many hours. The Iban and their neighbouring tribes treat the jungle as their supermarket, and all is at peace as long as everything is growing at nature's pace.

Gradually, the vegetation thinned and our eyes had to readjust to the afternoon sun that we had been deprived of during our hike. A sense of awe had slowly crept into me as we approached the river and, with it, our boat. These people whom we deemed 'un-developed', had all the skills and strength to provide themselves with any resources or food required. My thoughts were suddenly interrupted with Louis' deep, jovial throat clearing. He looked at me expectantly for a short moment and revealed,

“Cobra in the bigger holes. Tarantula in the smaller ones.”

In front of me, my father gasped.

**Emma Louise Rixhon**

Year 10



**Aisha Bennett**

## Dependence

Time at last has brought to us  
An answer to our prayers.  
Through day's hard tribulations, I just  
Need you to vanquish these cares.  
Invite me in your warm embrace  
And cradle my wearied fall;  
For you witness this most vulnerable state  
Yet accept me, despite it all.  
Trumping the noblest man,  
My breath is yours to take,  
So transport me to gold, Olympic lands  
And let me never wake.  
Watch me silver, wither, and whimper with age  
Witness dreams that writhe in my head -  
Give me stability, O night-time cage,  
My faithful companion: my Bed.

**Katharine Stocker**

Lower 6th



**Katie Anscombe**



Anuschka von der Heyden

## Yours

Sometimes, for seconds, she forgets herself  
 Maybe it's a picture, hard evidence  
 That she was happy, once, if nothing else  
 Your romance laced with iridescence.  
 Sometimes, your eyes caught hers in the mirror  
 An endless second of lost hope and dreams  
 Before you stopped believing in each other  
 Before you picked her apart at the seams.  
 You lie awake in the dead of the night  
 Her heartbeat reminds you that you're still alive  
 Fluttering, fragile like orchids of white  
 So easily broken, two human lives.  
 After all this time, empty eyes and closed doors  
 She still needs you; her fingers still find yours.

**Zoe Brandon**

Year 9

## Shadow

The first time I noticed you, I was very young. I had always taken for granted the way the light danced upon the wall and the manner of the dark spaces in between. Today, however, I saw them afresh - the way they fell into shapes, contrasting the light dramatically. What am I without you? I have no solidity. No presence. You showed the first people the time of day, you gave comfort to those without hope. You would always be there; even when you were hidden, I knew you'd return soon... if only so I could fall asleep. You are everywhere, in anything that exists in the past or the present. I notice you in the blink of an eye, a moment of thoughtfulness. Sometimes you scare me, growing out of proportion, invading my mind unnaturally. At these times I try to lose you, in the folds of the curtains, in wide open sky. But when you return, I am comforted once more.

**Charlotte McNally**

Year 9



**Arisa Manawapat**

## These rare hours

Like golden leaves, the little boy's laughter tumbles through the air. His peach cheeks inflate, filling his vision, as he presses his nose flat against the cool metal of a battered copper pot. His breath condenses in a little cloud and the reflection grows a beard. This unwelcome revelation is quickly smudged away.

His mother watches him from the fireside. She wishes this moment would last through everything. The dull ache of separation. She watches intently his every movement and mannerism, and presses her lids hard against her eyes. She wonders how he can carry on so careless, so free. These rare hours.

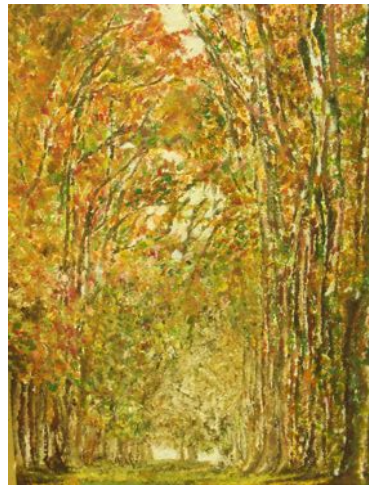
When she opens her eyes again her vision is distorted by pools of damp sorrow. She begins washing; she must be numb to the bite of the cheap soap in the cracks of her hands. She pushes the pain down with the methodical scrub of the cloth against the rack, the rush of the water as it leaps back in to the tub. He appears, and she tickles him into a glowing frenzy of mirth. She is so happy.

The moment subsides. The water drips rhythmically from the washing, teasing the cooked earth, so still in the midday heat.

*Loosely based on the painting Courtyard of a House in Delft, 1658 by Pieter de Hooch*

**Harriet Rudd-Jones**

Lower 6th



**Ploy Suthimai**

‘I’m not aiming, just firing, firing, loading and firing again.’

**Claire Holland** Year 8

‘The wrapper squeaks so slightly,  
As mice do treading lightly,  
Like rain drops pouring on the floor,  
A noise I simply can’t ignore.’

**Cecilia Catuogno-Cal** Year 7

‘I looked behind and felt the world slow down  
I know tonight in tears, my pain will drown.’

**Charlotte McNally** Year 9

‘Black ink courses down impassive lips  
That whisper incantations over wounds  
Screaming from her dark  
Finding no poultice but congealed silence.’

**Charlotte Day** Lower 6th

‘Deadly nightshade drifted eerily in the breeze, causing me to crouch  
in order to avoid those deathly dark berries, glittering-black in the half-  
light.’

**John Kendrick** Year 10

‘All I recall as I shake my dusty memories is the wanderer who  
warned me: ‘Never make twice the same mistake. Vary.’”

**Vinicius Bremer** Lower 6th

‘The giant blades hurled giant gusts of wind towards me. I  
squinted as the sandstorm on the helipad brewed.’

**Hans Lam** Year 10

‘Through twists and turns, lefts and rights, I am still searching  
all through the night.’

**Joshua Ganguli** Year 8

‘Russet feathers ripple,  
In the whispering breeze.’

**Bethany Hall** Year 10

‘He flies on broken wings, patched up with lies,  
Of smiling and laughing and dead charcoal eyes.’

**Zoe Brandon** Year 9

‘But still the memories remain of all those good and true,  
As silence takes over the fields.’

**Catherine Brown** Year 7

‘It was salad; nothing more, nothing less. Various plant leaves all thrown  
together in a great big bowl ‘for all to dig into’; my stomach started  
screaming for help.’

**Louis Nevison** Year 10

‘Dine not at apathy’s table  
Retain your individual pride.’

**William Davison** Upper 6th

‘Staring out my window admiring  
The silence. A silence that  
Resonates within me.’

**James White** Lower 6th

## The Bench

I pick up the note, still intact after two and a half years of wear, and my eyes travel down to that line;

‘I’ll meet you, at the bench. We need to talk about this.’

And there I sat and waited for him while the world around me burned slowly. The leaves dropped one after the other, occasionally in flurries. They landed, some on top of the forest floor, others on me and some on the space where he should have been. I brushed them off to hide how long I had been here, sitting and waiting. The cold was gripping me. Not only my fingers, burrowed as far back into their sleeves as they could, and my toes, which wriggled unseen in my boots, were shrivelling; but somewhere inside me, it hurt. I sat, my back hunched and my head bowed to this unseen force. And still I waited. I waited watching the shadows begin to conquer the forest floor. I stood up and left, the bench watching me stumble away, hunched over myself in the weakening light. And as I walked away, and doubtless after, the bench waited for him in my stead. As it does every night. After I am forced home by the dying day.

Home again, I bustle, things to be tidied, a meal to be cooked, an appearance to be created. And there the doorbell. I call out ‘Coming!’ and for effect, dust some flour onto my hair. Smile in position, I open the door and they are there. One stiff hug, smelling of roses, and one firm hand shake, my small quivering hand engulfed by his large sweating palms. As I precede them into the dining room, my mother with nimble fingers picks a crisp leaf out of my hair and with a reproachful glare mutters ‘You promised!’ before crushing the frail leaf in her cruel hand. Her other beats the flour out of my hair as if it were a carpet. Two minutes have passed and she has found two cracks in my charade.

The meal begins. Painfully slow. All the simple, uninteresting questions. ‘So, darling, how have you been?’ ‘Fine, fine, same as always,’ I insist, two opposites sharing my sentence. I am forced to look away from the unblinking eyes that watch me with immeasurable pity. So we resume the nothing talk, and I am relieved that despite my slips, it has worked. Yet as they leave, my mother hisses in my ear, ‘I knew it! You laid a place for him at table.’

Alba Elliot Year 11

## Isolation

I look through the window,  
They're laughing  
Loving  
Everything, I never had.

They do not notice me,  
My breath fogs up the glass  
Along with the raindrops and  
Tears.

People don't even know of me,  
I'm always ignored,  
An outcast.  
And the storm gets wilder.

It's too powerful now  
It's overcoming me as I realise,  
The glass is cracking.

My heart shatters like a window pane.

**Claire Holland**

Year 8



**Natalie Taylor**

## Zanzibar

Negotiating airport security required endless patience, as nothing is done in a hurry in Zanzibar. We finally escaped the bureaucracy, and stumbled out into the bright outdoors. Any semblance of tranquillity was broken. People from all directions began to talk at me, shout at me, ask me my name. I spun around in a full circle confused by the sudden madness. Men, women and children rapidly appeared begging for money, food, anything. A little boy of four or five came up to me and tapped me on the shoulder, looking up with huge brown eyes and pointing to a collection of shells threaded onto string. I shook my head feeling ashamed; we had been told on no account to start giving out change, however tempting it might be. I moved on from the boy, and attempted to take a step forward through all of the pandemonium. Drugged by the heat, I spotted my father heading over to a dirty white car. I followed, bombarded with more people wanting to carry my bag.

From within the taxi I looked more carefully at the people clamouring against the glass. Most had no shoes or socks, some didn't even have shirts. Groups of very small children, either selling trinkets or playing in the dirt, pushed a tyre along the ground, trying to see if they could keep it moving. Poverty was evident, but so was joy in simple pleasures. As we pulled away they turned back, all desperate to make money off the next tourist who walked through the doors.

I was surprised at the speed which our engaging taxi driver, Godley, was forcing out of the battered car. We sped along the dusty dirt road overtaking anyone in our path. "The road is a little bumpy" he warned us unnecessarily as I bounced around the back of the car. He began to tell us about the community in Zanzibar, "The name given to each child has a story. My name, Godley, comes from 'God listens', since I was the answer to my father's prayers, a son after six daughters." I listened carefully to his soft African accent which was battling with the growl of the engine, as our taxi surged forward. We passed home after home, shop after shop, all made from brick red mud, with a sheet of dark metal for roofing. We slowed as we met heavy traffic, finding ourselves now in the middle of a village market. Stands with fruits that I didn't even recognise stood out; bright pinks, greens, yellows and oranges all shouting from their dusty brown containers. People peered in through the car

window, staring at me, the westerner with light blonde hair. Multicoloured scarves strung like bunting from a road side stall, tangled themselves together in the wind making a beautiful pattern. Entwined, they danced together over the top of an array of vibrantly coloured shoes.

The traffic picked up and we were moving again. Adrenalin pulsed through my veins as we raced across roads, narrowly avoiding wobbling cyclists with large loads balanced precariously on their handlebars. A huge dirt cloud was kicked up behind us, so great that I could not see back. I coughed as the dust filled my lungs, and rapidly shoved the window closed, despite the heat.

**Fenella Keevil**

Year 10



**Olivia Paine**



Verve

Tell us about it.