



**Solo Verse U13 Girls and Solo Verse U13 Boys ----  
-Born 2013**

**ONLY ONE POEM TO BE PERFORMED**

### **Nettles**

*By Vernon Scannell*

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.  
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green  
spears,  
That regiment of spite behind the shed:  
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears  
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw  
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.  
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.  
At last he offered us a watery grin,  
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade  
And went outside and slashed in fury with it  
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade  
Stood upright any more.  
And then I lit  
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,  
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain  
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:  
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

### **What Has Happened To Lulu?**

*By Charles Causley*

What has happened to Lulu, mother?  
What has happened to Lu?  
There's nothing in her bed but an old rag-doll  
And by its side a shoe.

Why is her window wide, mother,  
The curtain flapping free,  
And only a circle on the dusty shelf  
Where her money-box used to be?

Why do you turn your head, mother,  
And why do tear drops fall?  
And why do you crumple that note on the fire  
And say it is nothing at all?

I woke to voices late last night,  
I heard an engine roar.  
Why do you tell me the things I heard  
Were a dream and nothing more?

I heard somebody cry, mother,  
In anger or in pain,  
But now I ask you why, mother,  
You say it was a gust of rain.

Why do you wander about as though  
You don't know what to do?  
What has happened to Lulu, mother?  
What has happened to Lu?



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### **Fairy Tale**

*by Miroslav Holub*

*(Translated from the Czech by George Theiner)*

He built himself a house,  
    his foundations,  
    his stones,  
    his walls,  
    his roof overhead,  
    his chimney and smoke,  
    his view from the window.

He made himself a garden,  
    his fence,  
    his thyme,  
    his earthworm,  
    his evening dew.

He cut out his bit of sky above.

And he wrapped the garden in the sky,  
and the house in the garden  
and packed the lot in a handkerchief  
and went off  
lone as an arctic fox  
through the cold  
unending  
rain  
into the world.

### **Little Boy and Lost Shoe**

*By Robert Penn Warren*

The little boy lost his shoe in the field.  
Home he hobbled, not caring, with a stick whipping  
goldenrod.

Go find that shoe—I mean it, right now!  
And he went, not now singing, and the field was big.

Under the sky he walked and the sky was big.  
Sunlight touched the goldenrod, and yellowed his  
hair,

But the sun was low now, and oh, he should know  
He must hurry to find that shoe, or the sun will be  
down.

Oh hurry, boy, for the grass will be tall as a tree.  
Hurry, for the moon has bled, but not like a heart, in  
pity.

Hurry, for time is money and the sun is low.  
Yes, damn it, hurry, for shoes cost money, you  
know.

I don't know why you dawdle and do not hurry.  
The mountains are leaning their heads together to  
watch.

How dilatory can a boy be, I ask you? Off in  
Wyoming,

The mountains lean. They watch. They know.



Solo Verse U15 ( Mixed) -----Born 2011

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### Those Winter Sundays

*By Robert Hayden*

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

### THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

*By Seamus Heaney*

When we climbed the slopes of the cutting  
We were eye-level with the white cups  
Of the telegraph poles and the sizzling wires.

Like lovely freehand they curved for miles  
East and miles west beyond us, sagging  
Under their burden of swallows.

We were small and thought we knew nothing  
Worth knowing. We thought words travelled the  
wires  
In the shiny pouches of raindrops,

Each one seeded full with the light  
Of the sky, the gleam of the lines, and ourselves  
So infinitesimally scaled

We could stream through the eye of a needle.



Solo Verse U16 ( Mixed) -----Born 2010

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## Sligo

*by Louis MacNeice*

In Sligo the country was soft; there were turkeys  
Gobbling under sycamore trees  
And the shadows of clouds on the mountains  
moving  
Like browsing cattle at ease.

And little distant fields were sprigged with haycocks  
And splashed against a white  
Roadside cottage a welter of nasturtium  
Deluging the sight,

And pullets pecking the flies from around the eyes  
of heifers  
Sitting in farmyard mud  
Among hydrangeas and the falling ear-rings  
Of fuchsias red as blood.

But in Mayo the tumbledown walls went leap-frog  
Over the moors,  
The sugar and salt in the pubs were damp in the  
casters  
And the water was brown as beer upon the shores

Of desolate loughs, and stumps of hoary bog-oak  
Stuck up here and there  
And as the twilight filtered on the heather  
Water-music filled the air,

And when the night came down upon the bogland  
With all-enveloping wings  
The coal-black turf-stacks rose against the  
darkness  
Like the tombs of nameless kings.

## Snipe.

*By J.P. Garvey*

Near nightfall where the bright-barked  
birch is pocked and peels  
where marshland grows thick bulrush, flagger,  
sedge-

abrupt from just beneath my heel  
a harsh cry spurted and became a snipe.

Zig-zag he hurtled with a flash of white  
too fast and low for silhouette  
a blur more than a sight  
he swerved by the gold-flecked gorse's edge.

When the bloodshot west turned jaundiced green  
and night had silted in the east  
when a bashful moon took on a silver sheen  
a fleet, high, roller-coasting speck  
began to make a winnowing sound  
that seemed the plaintive bleating of an infant goat.



**Solo Verse U18 ( Mixed) -----Born 2009/ 2008**

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**Antarctica (for Richard Ryan)**

*by Derek Mahon*

'I am just going outside and may be some time.'  
The others nod, pretending not to know.  
At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.

He leaves them reading and begins to climb,  
goading his ghost into the howling snow;  
he is just going outside and may be some time.

The tent recedes beneath its crust of rime  
and frostbite is replaced by vertigo:  
at the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.

Need we consider it some sort of crime,  
this numb self-sacrifice of the weakest? No,  
he is just going outside and may be some time

in fact, for ever. Solitary enzyme,  
though the night yield no glimmer there will glow,  
at the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.

He takes leave of the earthly pantomime  
quietly, knowing it is time to go.  
'I am just going outside and may be some time.'  
At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.

**Leaving the Tate**

*By Fleur Adcock*

Coming out with your clutch of postcards  
in a Tate gallery bag and another clutch  
of images packed into your head you pause  
on the steps to look across the river

and there's a new one: light bright buildings,  
a streak of brown water, and such a sky  
you wonder who painted it—Constable? No:  
too brilliant. Crome? No: too ecstatic—

a madly pure Pre-Raphaelite sky,  
perhaps, sheer blue apart from the white plumes  
rushing up it (today, that is,  
April. Another day would be different

but it wouldn't matter. All skies work.)  
Cut to the lower right for a detail:  
seagulls pecking on mud, below  
two office blocks and a Georgian terrace.

Now swing to the left, and take in plane-trees  
bobbled with seeds, and that brick building,  
and a red bus... Cut it off just there,  
by the lamp-post. Leave the scaffolding in.

That's your next one. Curious how  
these outdoor pictures didn't exist  
before you'd looked at the indoor pictures,  
the ones on the walls. But here they are now,

marching out of their panorama  
and queuing up for the viewfinder  
your eye's become. You can isolate them  
by holding your optic muscles still.

You can zoom in on figure studies  
(that boy with the rucksack), or still lives,  
abstracts, townscapes. No one made them.  
The light painted them. You're in charge

of the hanging committee. Put what space  
you like around the ones you fix on,  
and gloat. Art multiplies itself.  
Art's whatever you choose to frame.