Poetry Ireland
Éigse Éireann

Poetry Day Ireland

HOME

Thursday 28 May 2026

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Poetry Day Ireland is 28th May and Poetry Ireland is celebrating poetry in schools by offering this online collection of inspiring activities and ideas for teachers and children.

Packed with poems and fun activities, this vibrant online resource encourages teachers, children and families nationwide to read, write, listen to, illustrate, perform, share – and above all *enjoy* poetry. This imaginative poetry package, created and compiled by poet and teacher Enda Wyley, complements the Primary School Curriculum and can be used not just on Poetry Day, but every day!

The following tips and ideas offer children throughout Ireland the unique opportunity to connect with poetry for pleasure and for life.

1 PLANNING FOR POETRY DAY

If poetry is already an integral part of your school life, Poetry Day is a further opportunity to get children enthused about poems and to make your school a place which buzzes with the power of poetry.

How can this be achieved?

Share ideas amongst yourselves as teachers and in school about activities that could be set in place in preparation for Poetry Day Ireland. Some of these ideas might include:

- Reading a poem a day with your class.
- Having a favourite poem of the week.
- Making poetry a part of the daily discussions in each class.
- Poetry Treasure Hunt: This can be organised indoors or outdoors. Print out multiple copies of poems and hide them. Once the children find them, they make them their own by decorating them, hanging them up and reading/learning them off by heart.
- Poetry Tree: This is an activity that can be organised outdoors, using nearby trees. Get the children to cut out leaf shapes from card, write the poems of their choice on them, laminate them (if possible!) to make them weather proof and using string, attach them to branches of trees for everyone to enjoy.
- Encouraging children to find fun in poems and pleasure in the reading and writing of them.

Capturing the Excitement of Poetry Day

In the lead up to Poetry Day Ireland, on the day itself and beyond, celebrate all the fun poetry activities you have created and developed by taking photos, making videos, blogs, podcasts, and include all your imaginative work and its outcomes in your school newsletter and website.

What will You have Achieved?

Are children and staff reading more poetry? Are they talking about poetry? Are they sharing poetry, illustrating it, performing it and enjoying it more?
If the answer is a resounding 'yes!' then you have succeeded in making poetry a rich creative source of learning and pleasure within your school and classrooms.

2 LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING

How do you begin to celebrate poetry in your school and classrooms? Here are some fun and simple ideas.

A Quote from a Writer

The first poems I remember were nursery rhymes and playground rhymes. From the start, I loved the words, the rhythm of them, the nonsense of them ... you chanted them together, made them up together. They were fun.

Michael Morpurgo from, *Because a Fire was in my Head, 101 Poems to Remember* (Faber and Faber, 2013)

The Early Years (4–6 years)

The poet Thomas Lynch said that 'before it is a written or a read thing, poetry is a heard and a said thing.' The best of poems for children are full of rhythm and rhyme, and they demand to be read or chanted aloud. They can be, in the words of the children's illustrator Quentin Blake, 'funny and serious at the same time'.

Nursery Rhymes

From an early age, children love to be read aloud to. Being expressive and passionate about the rhymes and poems you read to children is an excellent way of developing a love in children for poetry - and nursery rhymes are always a great way to start.

Poetry Activities for Younger Children

- Read, sing or chant **nursery rhymes** and fun poems to younger children on a daily basis.
- Use the rhymes, rhythms and fun of **picture books** to instil a love of language in young readers. Books like *The Gruffalo* (Julia Donaldson), *Owl Babies* (Martin Wadell) and *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (Judith Kerr) are just some examples of stories that use language in an energetic, imaginative and repetitive way which is attractive to young children. These storybooks are essential in laying important poetic foundations in the child's world.
- **Music and movement** help bring poems alive. Once young children are familiar with a poem or rhyme, put music on with a good beat. Ask children to move around a space in a classroom or a hall, chanting the poem they know to the beat of the music. By familiarising themselves in this fun way with a poem, children feel a happy ownership of it.

- Use **objects** to create poems. Choose a 'magic' **object** to inspire a word poem e.g. a precious stone. Pick a word from a rhyme or poem that the children like e.g. 'bear.' Say the word out loud, then pass the object to another child who calls out another word connected with 'bear' and then he/she passes the object on. Pretty soon, a new word poem has been created to the beat of the music by the class, creating a sense of poetic achievement amongst the class.
- **Dream Time:** One of the best ways of creating a climate of dreaming is to relax. Get the younger children to sit quietly in a circle. Inhale and exhale. Play gentle music if it helps them to chill out. After a while ask them to say what they have been thinking. What pictures did they see in their minds? By repeating this practice every day, you are giving children the building blocks to dream and to tap into their inner world. You can also initiate guided dream time, whereby you ask the children to close their eyes and to tell them they are, for example, entering a forest. What can they see? Hear? Smell?
- Many of the above ideas can also be used for older children. For example, have fun with older classes getting them to **reinvent traditional rhymes**. Michael Rosen's, *Hairy Tales and Nursey Grimes* has imaginative and hilarious poems that poke fun at well-known rhymes. Encourage older children to read these cheeky rhymes as a way of being inspired to write their own!

Enjoying a Fun Poem

THE LOVE SONG OF HARRY HIPPO

LARRY O'LOUGHLIN

Harry Hippo fell in love
one Sunday afternoon
and sang his girlfriend love songs
beneath the jungle moon,

'Oh, marry me,' sang Harry,
'and I'll cover you in kisses
and be so proud when you become
my hippopotamissus!'

Responding to a Poem

Ask the class if they like this poem, 'The Love Song of Harry Hippo'? Are the sounds funny? Why do they make you laugh? Tell the children that **rhyme** is the repetition of sounds most usually at the end of lines in a poem.

Create your Own Nonsense Poem

Think up four words that sound the same. Now try to fit them into a poem so that they rhyme at the end of every second line. For example, in 'The Love Song of Harry Hippo' the word 'afternoon' rhymes with 'moon'. Make up words. Be as silly as you like! Have fun!

Irish Poetry Anthologies for the Early Years

Sally Go Round the Stars: Rhymes and Songs from an Irish Childhood, ed. by Sarah Webb, Steve Mc Carthy and Claire Ranson (O'Brien Press), and its follow on collection *A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea*, ed. by Sarah Webb and Steve Mc Carthy (O'Brien Press) are two anthologies of poetry which offer lots of Irish and international nursery rhyme favourites which children will adore, from 'She'll be Coming 'round the Mountain,' to 'The Owl and the Pussycat'.

Hopscotch in the Sky (Little Island and Poetry Ireland) by Irish poet Lucinda Jacob, and beautifully illustrated by Lauren O Neill, offers new poems about the seasons for young children.

Something Beginning with P, ed. Seamus Cashman (O'Brien Press, 2004) is a unique anthology of poems written especially for this collection by Irish poets and illustrated by Irish illustrators, which has many fun poems for the younger reader.

(A more extensive reading list of poetry anthologies and collections for children is available at the end of this online resource.)

3 SIMPLE AND FUN POETRY IDEAS FOR CHILDREN (6–12 YEARS)

What does Poetry Mean to You?

Brainstorm what poetry means to the children in your class by circling the word 'poetry' on your whiteboard and asking children to offer ideas to write up as an offshoot from the word.
Is it truthful, hurtful, funny, rhythmic, deep, memorable? Can you think of any other words to describe it? Does poetry help you understand yourself better? Does it help you make sense of the world that you live in?

Get children to make their own list of what poetry means to them and when finished, encourage them to read their lists out loud. Everybody has different ideas about poetry.

Remember! There are no rules about how poetry should be defined and there are no rules about how it should be written either!

Acrostic Poem

Read Gabriel Fitzmaurice's poem, 'Imagination',

I magination is the thing that
M akes you magic
A nd
G ives you
I nspiration to make everything
N ew,
A nd
T o
I nvent things that are
O nly seen by you, where
N othing is impossible. Imagine!

Can you write a similar acrostic poem about what poetry means to you?

P owerful
O utstanding
E xciting
T ruthful
R hythmic
Y appy!

Read What Poets have to say about Poetry

A good book to use as a resource is *The Bloodaxe Book of Poetry Quotations*, ed. by Dennis O' Driscoll, which is full of interesting comments by poets about what they think poetry is.

A poem has to be the most powerful thing one can say in the shortest space possible.
Charles Causley, BBC Radio 4, January 1993

My poems almost always start in some kind of memory ... It's like a beeper going off in your mind. Some little thing wakens excitement, and it gets connected with some other things. Ideally, it's like an avalanche – a little pebble begins to move, gathers a lot of energy and multiplies itself.
Seamus Heaney, *The New Mexican*, 2003

4 MORE IDEAS FOR POETRY DAY IRELAND

We all have our own memories and our own stories to tell

All of our experiences are valid material for writing a poem. Everything that happens to us is important and can be used as inspiration to write a new piece of poetry.

Making use of a 'magic' object as a prompt, pass it around and ask children to say one thing about themselves. *I am ten years of age ... My address is ... I have three brothers ... I love my dog ... my hobby is swimming, etc.*

List Poems

Poetry uses language in interesting ways. Encourage the class to now tell a 'poem story' about themselves in an interesting way.
Use the form of a list to create a poem about you. Think up an interesting title

SONG OF ME

(Example by Enda Wyley)

The day I was born
The wind in my hair as I cycle to school
The smile on my Dad's face
when I come home from school
The sun in my mum's hair
The warmth of my little brother's hand in mine ...

Look with your class at **Lucinda Jacob's** poem, 'I Am'. Try writing a poem about yourself using animals to create a series of word pictures just like Lucinda has done in her poem. Begin each sentence of your list poem with 'I am'.

I AM

I am a tortoise crawling out of bed in the morning
I am a cat lapping up my milk at breakfast
I am a puppy tumbling in the classroom door
I am an ant pushing my load uphill all day
I am an eagle diving on my snack at breaktime
I am a lizard snoozing in the sun of story time
I am a cheetah racing in the afternoon park
I am a lion roaring at the top of the hill
I am a bear with my honey at teatime
I am an owl blinking in the twilight
I am a salmon swimming upstream against sleep
I am the dreamer with dreams deep as the ocean.

Reading Aloud

Reading your own poetry aloud is a great way of celebrating your writing and the writing of others in your class. When you have written your list poems about yourself enjoy sharing them with others by reading them with energy and expression.

What the Poet Says...

When you read good poetry aloud, your lips pout and stretch, your tongue jives, your whole mouth is vigorously exercised.

Michael Longley, *Poetry Ireland Review*, Summer 1999

Our News

We often have news time in class – what we did at the weekend, books we have read, places we have visited, people we have met...

But the poem, 'I've News for You,' an anonymous poem, translated by Seán Hutton from the ninth-century Irish, found in *The Poolbeg Book of Irish Poetry*, tells a very different kind of news. Like Lucinda Jacob's poem, 'I Am,' this ancient poem uses language in an interesting way. There is an elegant simplicity to this poem which paints an imaginative rural image of the poet's news, set in a place close to his heart.

See if you can write a poem which begins, 'I've news for you'. Fill it with word pictures of a place that you love, and end your poem with the definite line, 'that's my news'.

I'VE NEWS FOR YOU

I've news for you;
the stag bellows,
winter's snow,
summer's gone;

high cold wind
sun low in sky,
short days,
heavy seas;

deep red bracken's
skeletal form,
barnacle goose's
customed call;

cold has seized
the bird's wings,
icy season;
that's my news.

We Write What We Like

Be inspired by the poem, 'I Love These Hands,' by Queva Zheng, age 14, a student at Larkin Community College, Dublin 1. By writing about the hands of her grandparents, Queva tells her own story. This is an imaginative, heartfelt poem and one that is not easy to forget.

Be honest and brave like Queva is in her poem and write a poem about the hands of someone you love. Trace your own hands with pencil on paper, cut them out and write your new poem within the hand you have drawn. Display the hand poems in the school and class.

I LOVE THESE HANDS

I love these hands,
The hands of my grandparents.

These hands hold my hand,
While crossing the road.

These hands cook delicious foods,
When my brother and I are hungry.

These hands hold me up,
When I trip over.

These hands tie my hair up,
During the warm weather.

These hands wipe off my tears,
When I am sad.

These hands reach everything I want,
Everything that I cannot reach.

I love the wrinkles on these old hands.

One day they will be gone,
So I need to cherish these hands,
Until I cannot see or touch them,

Anymore.

Poetry as a Recipe for Happiness

What makes you happy? Can you capture happiness in a poem?
Read Grace Wells's poem,

THE RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

The recipe for happiness in our house
is to take a cup of flour,
and milk, two eggs, a pinch of salt,
and whisk for half an hour.

Then take the creamy mixture
to the steaming frying pan,
ladle little circles in,
as many as you can.

Watch them all turn gold and brown,
then sit down to eat,
sugar and lemon on one side,
pour maple syrup to complete.

Write your own Recipe for Happiness

Draw cooking pots on coloured paper. Cut them out and line them. Write your 'recipe' poem within this pot and decorate it and display. Some of the recipes may be imaginative but others such as Grace Wells's poem might be practical and can actually be cooked in class. Enjoy making a pizza or a pancake – or whatever your recipe is - to go with your poem!

What does not make you happy?

Read Catherine Ann Cullen's poem, 'The Jellyleg Germ' (page 31). Nobody likes taking medicine and this is a warm and funny poem on that subject. The structure of this poem is comprised of three four-line verses with each two lines rhyming (A-A, B-B.) Try writing a poem in this structure with rhymes describing in a fun way something that you most definitely *don't* like!
Take a look at the poem, 'Jellyfish,' by Gabriel Rosenstock. Does this poem make you smile even though it is supposed to be a sad poem? Poetry can be playful and serious all at once!

Inspiration from a Poem

Take a poem like Julie O'Callaghan's, 'Me in a Tree'. Hide the title and ask the class to guess what it might be. As the poet herself changes her mind at the end of the poem about her original title, this is a perfect poem to use for this activity!

Poem Portraits

Read Michael Hartnett's poem, 'Death of an Irish Woman'. Concentrate particularly on the last six lines of this poem.

> She was a summer dance at the crossroads.
> She was a card game where a nose was broken.
> She was a song that nobody sings.
> She was a house ransacked by soldiers.
> She was a language seldom spoken.
> She was a child's purse, full of useless things.

Think of someone you know and love and write six lines about them beginning 'He is...' or 'She is...' If you have photographs of the people you have written about bring them in to school. Create a portrait gallery with poems and photographs. You could also draw portraits of friends or family that will complement your poems.

'Brother,' by Jade Byrne, a Transition Year Student from Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount, Dublin 8, is also a great poem. This poem was inspired by Michael Hartnett's poem. It is a fine example of how a poem by a great poet can inspire a new poem to be written by a young, talented student like Jade Byrne.

Portrait Poems

Read and enjoy the wonderful poem, 'Lion King' by Joseph Woods. Look at the imaginative images he uses and how he extends them. The newspaper is 'flopped/ to his feet like a seagull.' And when the old man 'wakes from his snooze/ he always looks like a spaceman landed on some strange planet.' This poem by Joseph Woods also ends with a quirky question, 'Grandad/ were you old before you were old?'

Write a poem about your granny or grandad that captures exactly who they are to you. Try and end the poem with a question that gets us thinking about the person you are describing.

Songs of Magic

Poetry is a magical force! If you were to make a witchy stew of words what would you fling in your cauldron? Read and enjoy Mark Granier's poem, 'Song of The Fourth (Weirder) Sister.'

Use the first line, 'In my cauldron I will fling...' to begin your poem and invent a bizarre concoction of things to stir into your pot. Invent a two-line rhyming spell to put in the middle of each verse that will be fun to chant.

In my cauldron I will fling
bits of almost everything,
pencil-shavings, tufts of hair,
all the paper I can tear,

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

feathers from a dead man's pillow,
old tears from a weeping willow,
little weeds that poke and flounce
(with Latin names I can't pronounce)

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy...

The Magic of Animals

There is a still sense of magic to this beautiful short poem by the Cork poet Leanne O'Sullivan called, 'Fox.' What would it be like if you were walking out a lane and you met a fox? And what would it be like if you and the fox had a conversation? What would you say to each other? Ask the class these questions without showing them Leanne's poem. Encourage the class to write about encountering a fox – or any other animal – on a lane. When they have finished their poems and shared them with each other, then read the poem.

Do you like it? Why? Perhaps you did not like this poem? Why?

FOX

Halfway along the way a fox appeared
out of the perishing hedgerows and stopped
on the road in front of him,

the lines of her breast straight and clear,
fear having fallen away from there.
What is she doing? he thought. She said,

I am waiting to see what you will do next.
That's funny, he said, beginning to follow,
I am doing the very same thing.

And that was the way they went, morning
after morning, the hedgerows turning
their infinite colours, the body with its one fire.

Poetry Writing Exercises Using your Senses

Exercise 1

Sit outdoors for a few minutes with your eyes closed. Write down a record of what you have heard around you. Add to the sound any smells you have become aware of - the feel of the grass, concrete about you, the air against your skin, etc. Then open your eyes completely and add all the things you can see to the record.

Exercise 2

Keep your notebook next to you as you eat a meal and jot down all that is happening, as if all you can do is taste. Try to capture the complete sensations of tasting, chewing and swallowing.

Exercise 3

Take your notebook out for a walk and write down everything that is happening about you. Try to build up a flow of ideas and leave no sensation unexplored or unrecorded. Touch, smell everything around you - a railing, hedges, smell new paint, traffic fumes, a bonfire, etc. Write it all down.

Exercise 4

At night, leave your notebook by your bed. Read some poems before you sleep. When you wake up, try and capture what you have dreamt. Sometimes this can be difficult, but keep trying for a few days, to capture at least one dream.

Don't forget! Have fun!

A Poet Speaks

If you're going to write a poem of political protest ... you have to be sure that it's your subject, that it's your anger, not somebody else's anger...

Seamus Heaney, *Between the Lines*, 2000

The Power of Words

Read the following two poems by Olivia Barabanchuk and Marc Gijsemans with the class.

WORDS

Words
Hurt more
Than paper cuts
And slaps across the face

They sting
More than
Lemon juice
On open wounds defaced

They litter
Our bodies
Like awful scars
Reminding of the fights

We try
To hide
Them through the days
And heal on lonely nights

WHATEVER

Whatever country we came from
Whatever country we are in now
Whatever language we used to speak
Whatever language we speak now
The sound of our children crying
remains the same.

The first poem, 'Words,' is a poignant and powerful poem about the hurt that words, if used unkindly, can inflict. There is a painful honesty to this poem that is admirable and impressive given that it is written by a secondary school student.

'Whatever', the second poem by Marc Gijsemans, is also a painfully honest poem revealing the horror of being a refugee, driven by war and politics away from your homeland.

Poetry Exercise suitable for older children (10-12 years)

Poems are other people's snapshots in which we recognise ourselves.
Charles Simic, *The Unemployed Fortune-Teller*, 1994

Bring into class newspaper articles with human interest stories from around the world. As a group try to imagine living the lives of the people depicted in these articles. Write down your thoughts and see do they make a new poem.

Is it hard to imagine another person's life?
When you do this, do you feel that you have more empathy for others?

5 POEMS OF CELEBRATION

On Poetry Day Ireland, 28th May 2026, use poetry as a way of celebrating the world that we live in. A poem that does this superbly is Brendan Kennelly's poem, 'Begin'. Display this magnificent poem in your class. It is a perfect poem to read out loud with older children. The more they read it, the more this poem will work its way into their psyche, becoming a much-loved hymn to our capital city of Dublin. A great poem to know off by heart!

BEGIN

Begin again to the summoning birds
to the sight of light at the window,
begin to the roar of morning traffic
all along Pembroke Road.
Every beginning is a promise
born in light and dying in dark
determination and exaltation of springtime
flowering the way to work.
Begin to the pageant of queuing girls
the arrogant loneliness of swans in the canal
bridges linking the past and the future
old friends passing through with us still.
Begin to the loneliness that cannot end
since it perhaps is what makes us begin,
begin to wonder at unknown faces
at crying birds in the sudden rain
at branches stark in the willing sunlight
at seagulls foraging for bread
at couples sharing a sunny secret
alone together while making good.
Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.

6 AND FINALLY ... THINGS TO REMEMBER IF YOU WANT TO WRITE POEMS

- Always be curious
- Always keep a notebook
- Love reading
- Try and write every day
- Enjoy the world around you
- Be interested in lots of different things

Whatever you can do or dream you can do. Begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Goethe

Les Murray said about writing poems:
You've got to be able to dream at the same time as you think to write poetry. You think with a double mind. It's like thinking with both sides of your brain at once ... Poetry is as much dreamed as it is thought and it as much danced in the body as it is written. It's done in your lungs. It's done in every part of your muscles – you can feel it in your muscles.

Keep dreaming!

Follow on Ideas to Poetry Day Ireland 2026

Poetry Ireland would love to hear about all the wonderful poetry activities you created in your school on the lead up to, and on Poetry Day in April ... and beyond! Poetry Slams, Poetry Parties, Poetry Aloud, Visiting Poets...

Don't forget to record your work, take photos and send your poetry news to Poetry Ireland:
writersinschools@poetryireland.ie

Reading Ideas for your School, Classroom and Home

Here are suggestions of some vibrant and inspiring books of poetry for children for the poetry shelves in your classrooms, school and home. These are fantastic books to be read and enjoyed on Poetry Day and all year round!

- *Sally Go Round the Stars: Rhymes and Songs from an Irish Childhood*, ed. by Sarah Webb, Steve McCarthy and Claire Ranson (O'Brien Press, 2014)
- *A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea*, ed. by Sarah Webb and Steve McCarthy (O'Brien Press, 2017)
- *Something Beginning with P*, ed. by Seamus Cashman, illustrated by Corina Askin and Alan Clarke (O'Brien Press, 2004)
- *Let's Join In*, Shirley Hughes (Walker Books, 2004)
- *Here's a Little Poem*, ed. by Jane Yolen and Andrew Fusek Peters, illustrated by Polly Dunbar (Walker Books, 2007)
- *Once Upon A Place*, ed. by Eoin Colfer (Little Island, 2017)
- *Hopscotch in the* Sky, Lucinda Jacob (Little Island and Poetry Ireland, 2017)
- *All Better!* ed. by Inese Zandere, Catherine Ann Cullen and Reinis Pētersons (Little Island, 2018)
- *Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and* Gravy, Michael Rosen (Bloomsbury, 2008)
- *The Puffin Book of Nonsense Verse*, ed. and illustrated by Quentin Blake (1997)
- *Singing for Mrs Pettigrew, A Story Maker's Journey*, Michael Morpurgo (Walker Books, 2006)
- *Inside Out, Children's Poets Discuss their Work* (Walker Books, 2008)
- *All Day Saturday and Other Poems*, Charles Causley (Macmillan, 1995)
- *Red Cherry Red*, Jackie Kay (Bloomsbury, 2007)
- *I like this Poem*, ed. by Kaye Webb (Puffin, 2016)
- *The Oxford Book of Children's Poetry*, ed. by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart Clark (2007)
- *The Faber Book of Children's Verse*, ed. by Matthew Sweeney (2003)
- *Staying Alive*, ed. by Neil Astley (Bloodaxe Books, 2016)
- *The Emergency Kit*, ed. by Jo Shapcott, Matthew Sweeney (Faber and Faber, 2004)
- *What is Poetry? The Essential Guide to Reading and Writing Poems*, Michael Rosen and Jill Calder (Walker Books, 2019)

Listening to Poets and Poetry

Enjoy listening to poets talk about their work on:

Arena with Séan Rocks, RTÉ Radio 1
www.rte.ie/radio1/arena/

Words Lightly Spoken Podcast, Poetry Ireland and RTÉ Radio 1
http://wordslightlyspoken.libsyn.com/

Encounter poets and their works on some of the following websites

The Poetry Society
www.poetrysociety.org.uk

The Guardian Children's Books Podcast
www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/series/childrens-books-podcast
A fun podcast where young and passionate readers quiz their favourite writers

Texts of Poems Used in this Poetry Day Ireland Resource for Teachers and Schools, 28th May 2026

THE LOVE SONG OF HARRY HIPPO

LARRY O'LOUGHLIN

Harry Hippo fell in love
One Sunday afternoon
And sang his girlfriend love songs
beneath the jungle moon.
'Oh marry me,' sang Harry
and I'll cover you in kisses
and be so proud when you become
my hippopotamissus.'

Something Beginning with P (O'Brien Press, 2004)

IMAGINATION

Gabriel Fitzmaurice

I magination is the thing that
M akes you magic
A nd
G ives you
I nspiration to make everything
N ew,
A nd
T o
I nvent things that are
O nly seen by you, where
N othing is impossible. Imagine!

from *Will You be My Friend: New and Selected Poems for the Young and Young at Heart* (Liberties Press, 2016)

THE RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

Grace Wells

The recipe for happiness in our house
is to take a cup of flour,
and milk, two eggs, a pinch of salt,
and whisk for half an hour.

Then take the creamy mixture
to the steaming frying pan,
ladle little circles in,
as many as you can.

Watch them all turn gold and brown,
then sit down to eat,
sugar and lemon on one side,
pour maple syrup to complete.

from *Something Beginning with P* (O'Brien Press, 2004)

I AM

Lucinda Jacob

I am a tortoise crawling out of bed in the morning
I am a cat lapping up my milk at breakfast
I am a puppy tumbling in the classroom door
I am an ant pushing my load uphill all day
I am an eagle diving on my snack at breaktime
I am a lizard snoozing in the sun of story time
I am a cheetah racing in the afternoon park
I am a lion roaring at the top of the hill
I am a bear with my honey at teatime
I am an owl blinking in the twilight
I am a salmon swimming upstream against sleep
I am the dreamer with dreams deep as the ocean.

from *Hopscotch in the Sky* (Little Island and Poetry Ireland, 2017)

I'VE NEWS FOR YOU

Anonymous

I've news for you;
the stag bellows,
winter's snow,
summer's gone;

high cold wind
sun low in sky,
short days,
heavy seas;

deep red bracken's
skeletal form,
barnacle goose's
customed call;

cold has seized
the bird's wings,
icy season;
that's my news.

Translated by Seán Hutton from ninth-century Irish, from *The Poolbeg Book of Irish Poetry* (1998)

I LOVE THESE HANDS

QUEVA ZHENG

I love these hands,
The hands of my grandparents.

These hands hold my hand,
While crossing the road.

These hands cook delicious foods,
When my brother and I are hungry.

These hands hold me up,
When I trip over.

These hands tie my hair up,
During the warm weather.

These hands wipe off my tears,
When I am sad.

These hands reach everything I want,
Everything that I cannot reach.

I love the wrinkles on these old hands.

One day they will be gone,
So I need to cherish these hands,
Until I cannot see or touch them,

Anymore.

Queva is a student at Larkin Community College, Dublin 1

THE JELLYLEG GERM

Catherine Ann Cullen

No way out of taking your medicine
whether your name is Evans or Edison,
with those bugs you must be firm,
or you'll get caught by the jellyleg germ.

No matter if under the covers you slip,
dressed in your jammies or all in the nip,
the Jellyleg Germ will catch hold of your toe,
and greener and greener and greener you'll go!

So open up wide for the medicine spoon.
And the Jellyleg Germ will be gone very soon.
When he sees the bottle, he'll leg it for sure,
'cause his jelly legs shiver when he sees a cure!

from *All Better!* (Little Island, 2018)

DEATH OF AN IRISHWOMAN

Michael Hartnett

Ignorant, in the sense
she ate monotonous food
and thought the world was flat,
and pagan, in the sense
she knew the things that moved
all night were neither dogs or cats
but púcas and darkfaced men
she nevertheless had fierce pride.
But sentenced in the end
to eat thin diminishing porridge
in a stone-cold kitchen
she clenched her brittle hands
around a world
she could not understand.
I loved her from the day she died.
She was a summer dance at the crossroads.
She was a card game where a nose was broken.
She was a song that nobody sings.
She was a house ransacked by soldiers.
She was a language seldom spoken.
She was a child's purse, full of useless things.

from *Collected Poems* by kind permission of the author's estate c/o The Gallery Press (1994)

LION KING

Joseph Woods

You've been watching the weather
in your grandad's face
as he sleeps armchaired
in the sitting room

and how the newspaper flopped
to his feet like a seagull
big with wings of newsprint.

Watching the weather in his face
is more interesting than The Lion King
and when he wakes from his snooze
he always looks like a spaceman

landed on some strange planet
but still manages a smile
when you ask him. *Grandad*
were you old before you were old?

from *Something Beginning with P* (O'Brien Press, 2004)

BROTHER

Jade Byrne

He is funny.
He is caring.
He is protective
He is awkward.
He is tall.
He is a big softie.
He is an idiot.
He is sometimes useless.
He is clueless.
He is immature (depending on the scenario)
but he is mature.
He is not a lightweight.
He is a fussy eater.
He is gentle.
He is rough.
He is strong.
He is broad.
He is dopey.
He is book smart.
He is street wise.
He looks like a hard lad.
But he is really mushy inside.

Jade Byrne is a student at Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount, Dublin 8

SONG OF THE FOURTH (WEIRDER) SISTER

Mark Granier

In my cauldron I will fling
bits of almost everything,
pencil-shavings, tufts of hair,
all the paper I can tear,

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

feathers from a dead man's pillow,
old tears from a weeping willow,
little weeds that poke and flounce
(with Latin names I can't pronounce)

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

licks of scum from filthy baths,
chewing gum from roads and paths,
a judge's wig, a widow's curse,
a dirty day that's getting worse,

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

a dizzy spell, a dose of flu,
a pinch of feeling black or blue,
envy, anger, things we hope
we'll wash away with scented soap,

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

spit from someone shiny clean,
smiles from *Hello!* magazine,
a dead rat's tongue, a spider's heart,
a warlock's after-dinner fart,

Rumble, rumble, like my tummy,
Make this magic thick and gummy,

Boil and stir until the stink
makes a drowsy demon blink!

Castaway (school magazine, Little Island)

ME IN A TREE

Julie O'Callaghan

Unfortunately it wasn't
a luxury tree house
with hot and cold running cocoa
or with a robin

bringing me breakfast in bed.
A squirrel didn't toss acorns
at me when I needed to wake up.
No – that wasn't how it was.

I hid high up in the leaves.
So many thoughts were floating.
I speared them on to twigs
to see them twinkle in the sun.

But now I realise
I named this poem the wrong thing.
It's not me in a tree.
It's the tree in me.

from *Something Beginning with P* (O'Brien Press, 2004)

FOX

Leanne O'Sullivan

Halfway along the way a fox appeared
out of the perishing hedgerows and stopped
on the road in front of him,

the lines of her breast straight and clear,
fear having fallen away from there.
What is she doing? he thought. She said,

I am waiting to see what you will do next.
That's funny, he said, beginning to follow,
I am doing the very same thing.

And that was the way they went, morning
after morning, the hedgerows turning
their infinite colours, the body with its one fire.

from *A Quarter of an Hour* (Bloodaxe Books, 2018)

AN SMUGAIRLE RÓIN

Gabriel Rosenstock

Cén fáth a bhfuil tusa ag déanamh bróin
A smugairle róin?
Cén fáth a bhfuil tusa ag déanamh bróin?

Cé a dúirt go bhfuil tusa ag déanamh bróin?
arsa an smugairle róin
Cé a dúirt go bhfuil mise ag déanamh bróin?

Cad atá ar siúl agat, a smugairle róin?
Ag ithe do lóin?
Cad atá ar siúl agat, a smugairle róin?

Tá mé i mo shuí ar mo thóin,
arsa an smugairle róin,
ag ithe mo lóin is ag déanamh bróin
agus beidh mé anseo go dtí – fan go bhfeicfidh mé
ceathrú tar éis a ceathair, ar a laghad, san iarnóin.

Translated by Seán Hutton and Shaun Traynor, in *The Poolbeg Book of Irish Poetry for Children* (1998)

THE JELLYFISH

Gabriel Rosenstock

Why are you unhappy
little jellyfish?
Why are you unhappy?

Who told you I'm unhappy?
said the little jellyfish.
Who told you I'm unhappy?

What are you doing, little jellyfish?
Eating your lunch?
What are you doing, little jellyfish?

I'm sitting on my bum,
said the little jellyfish,
eating my lunch into my tum and being unhappy
and I shall be here – let me see – until kingdom come
or at least 'til a quarter past four.

Translated by Seán Hutton and Shaun Traynor, in *The Poolbeg Book of Irish Poetry for Children* (1998)

WORDS

OLIVIA BARABANCHUK

Words
Hurt more
Than paper cuts
And slaps across the face

They sting
More than
Lemon juice
On open wounds defaced

They litter
Our bodies
Like awful scars
Reminding of the fights

We try
To hide
Them through the days
And heal on lonely nights

Olivia Barabanchuk is a student at Presentation Community College, Terenure, Dublin 6

WHATEVER

Marc Gijsemans

Whatever country we came from
Whatever country we are in now
Whatever language we used to speak
Whatever language we speak now
The sound of our children crying
remains the same

from New Ireland Workshops at the Irish Writers Centre with Mark Granier

BEGIN

Brendan Kennelly

Begin again to the summoning birds
to the sight of light at the window,
begin to the roar of morning traffic
all along Pembroke Road.
Every beginning is a promise
born in light and dying in dark
determination and exaltation of springtime
flowering the way to work.
Begin to the pageant of queuing girls
the arrogant loneliness of swans in the canal
bridges linking the past and the future
old friends passing through with us still.
Begin to the loneliness that cannot end
since it perhaps is what makes us begin,
begin to wonder at unknown faces
at crying birds in the sudden rain
at branches stark in the willing sunlight
at seagulls foraging for bread
at couples sharing a sunny secret
alone together while making good.
Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.

from *The Essential Brendan Kennelly* (Bloodaxe Books, 2011)

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