

Poems for Big Kids

Rhyming poetry for children ages 8 - 13

A collection compiled and edited by

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Poems for Big Kids

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Preface

Third in our series of collections of rhyming, metrical poetry by contemporary authors, we are pleased to present *Poems for Big Kids*, an anthology for older children.

A young person's earliest exposure to structured, rhyming poetry usually comes in the form of traditional nursery rhymes. The historical origin of a political satire like "Sing a Song of Sixpence," or a bleak commentary on the Black Plague like "Ring Around the Rosy," is completely lost on modern-day parents and tykes who delight in these quaint, old verses. However, rhyme and rhythm alone are enough to inscribe ancient doggerel in impressionable, young minds for a lifetime, centuries after our beloved nursery rhymes have ceased to have the slightest relevance to contemporary world events.

In her introductory chapter, Ann Dixon outlines how children's poetry evolved from simple roots to fruition in some of the greatest classics of humor, instruction and morality that are still known and loved to this day. However, modern times have not been kind to the type of skilful, rhyming poetry that was familiar to our grandparents when they were putting their little ones to bed. When our youngsters' attention spans have shriveled to the length of television commercials, and their bedtimes are pushed later and later by the lure of electronic entertainment and homework obligations that are sometimes onerous, a medium such as poetry has difficulty competing, since it requires both intellectual engagement and sufficient time for quiet contemplation. Could this be the reason why the best of children's poetry has long found itself between the covers of "bedtime" books? Bedtime remains that precious, quiet space at the end of a busy day when parents and young children can still interact in a close and thoughtful manner, free from other distractions.

While the classics of poetry are to be treasured, it must be acknowledged that even a great and famous poem about a village blacksmith has limited resonance with children who are growing up in cities, who have never seen a horse at close range, and who don't know what a smithy is. Fortunately, there are still writers who believe that our children deserve better intellectual nourishment than the silly, often violent pap served up in video games. Although it is given short shrift by a publishing industry that is necessarily focused on profit for its very survival, there exists a significant body of accomplished and meaningful contemporary poetry for young people. This book is one attempt to capture, record and distribute some of the best of this poetry before it disappears as ephemera.

Our greatest debt of thanks, therefore, is owed to the authors whose work comprises this collection. Posted on the Internet, our call for submissions elicited a wide response from the English-speaking world and beyond. Authors hail from Canada, the United States of America, Australia, the United Kingdom, India, France and the United Arab Emirates. For this reason, spelling in both British and American Press Standard forms is used in this volume, depending on the preference of the poets. We welcome back a number of writers who contributed work to our two earlier compendiums. We are honored to include several authors whose high reputations precede them to these pages; and others whose poetry appears in print for the very first time with publication of this book.

The help of many other people is gratefully acknowledged. Angela Burns proof read the entire manuscript; and she gave invaluable editorial and technical help, becoming a co-Editor of this volume in the process. Thanks to artist Ilene Black for introducing herself to us, and for her enthusiastic participation throughout this project to create its superb, original illustrations. Ann Dixon has written a fine essay about the historical background of children's poetry. Dr. Nazlin McAlister was our captive audience and sounding board at home for many poems that were read to her aloud. Thanks to the various literary societies and on-line poetry sites that publicized our call for submissions; and to friends who read and commented on work that we received over the course of a year, helping us to extract the best poems from among hundreds that we reviewed. Jean Taylor converted our original manuscript files to the professional format suitable for the printing press. Finally, but by no means least, we recognize the expertise of Multitech Graphics Inc. of Whitby, Ontario, for printing and binding.

N. H. M^cA. & Z. M^cA.

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Poetry and Children

Ann Dixon

Poetry for children begins as an oral art. Even today, in our media saturated world, nursery rhymes and word play introduce babies and young children to their language and culture. Historically, children's poetry began orally as well. Used both to instruct and entertain, poetry has shaped generations of children and the literature of childhood as a whole.

Before the printing press, hand-produced books were available only to the children of the wealthy. Many primary lesson books were written in rhyme. Most children, lacking these books, instead absorbed whatever appealed to them from the oral literature they heard. Poetic forms of these literary nuggets might include lullabies, work songs, ballads, and nursery rhymes. Elements of poetry, such as alliteration, rhyme, meter, and rhythm aided the memorization and retention of oral literature. Imagery depended not on pictures, which were few, but primarily on the imaginations of listeners in response to the words they heard.

As early as the fifteenth century, printers began producing literary texts aimed at children, not to entertain them with stories, but to educate. "Courtesy books," as they were called, emphasized manners and behavior, often employing rhyme to aid memorization. With the exception of early Latin grammar texts, the first book known to be printed for children was *Les Contenances de la Table*, published in France around 1487. It conveyed table manner lessons in rhyming quatrains. This excerpt from "Symon's Lesson of Wisdom for All Manner Children," from *The Babees' Book*, typifies the emphasis on instruction, rather than literary quality:

Child, over men's houses no stones fling
 Nor at glass windows no stones sling...
 Child, keep thy book, cap and gloves
 And all things that thee behoves,
 And but thou do, thou shalt fare worse
 And thereto be beat on the bare erse (in Townsend, p. 4).

In 1646 John Cotton wrote the first known book for children published in the New World; *Milk for Babes, Drawn out of the Breasts of Both Testaments, Chiefly for the Spirituall Nourishment of Boston Babes in either England, but may be of like Use for any Children*. A summary of Puritan theology in verse, it begins:

Who is the Maker of all things?
 The Almighty God who reigns on high.
 He form'd the earth, He spread the sky (in Sutherland, p.45).

Another Puritan title popular at the time, *A Looking Glass for Children* (1672), offers this chilling rhyme:

Hath God such comeliness bestowed
 And on me made to dwell,
 'Tis pity such a pretty maid
 As I should go to Hell (in Townsend, p. 6).

John Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls* (1686), written in verse and later issued as *Divine Emblems* (1724), is not as well-known as his *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which was written in prose for adults. Nor is it likely to be read by contemporary children, due to the grimness of its verses. *The New England Primer*, first published in 1680, contains a variety of pictures and verses — all intended for moral and reading instruction. It became the primary reader for children in the American colonies. Known for its rhymes and woodcuts (one for each letter of the alphabet), the first verse is still famous: "In Adams fall/We sinned all." Numerous editions of the book were published in the centuries that followed.

Another publication of note was Perrault's collection of folktales, subtitled "Tales of Mother Goose," first produced in France in 1697, then published in English by R. Samber in 1729 as a chapbook, or small booklet. The stories were told in prose, but concluded with one or more rhymed morals.

Rhyme continued to be considered useful as a didactic tool. Dr. Isaac Watts, in the preface to his tremendously popular *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* (1715), extols the virtues of verse for its instructional value:

There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and Metre, that will incline Children to make this part of their business a Diversion ... What is learnt in Verse is longer retain'd in Memory, and sooner recollected. The like Sounds and the like number of Syllables exceedingly assist the remembrance (in Townsend, p. 104).

Watts used "Rhymes and Metre" more artfully than his published predecessors. His *Divine and Moral Songs* were so successful that six or seven hundred editions of the book were published over the following two centuries in England and America. "Cradle Hymn" was included in later editions of *The New England Primer* and other verses were so well known that several were parodied 150 years later by Lewis Carroll in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

From Didacticism to Diversion

Watts' poems and their success reflected a profound softening of the Puritan outlook. Alongside Watts, the versifier most significant to children over the next 75 years was Mother Goose. Uncertainty surrounds the first publication date of "her" rhymes, which are not attributed to any one author, but arose over many decades from oral tradition. Mother Goose rhymes provided — and still provide — children with an

introduction to poetic elements such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, and meter. With their sing-song quality and variety of topics and types - alphabet, proverbs, stories, songs, nonsense, and tongue twisters, to name a few - the rhymes range from nonsensical to instructional. Though often disregarded as literature, these verses have survived and thrived through the transition from oral to written literature.

A noteworthy book during that time period was produced in 1744 by John Newbery (for whom the most prestigious award in United States children's literature, the Newbery Medal, is named). *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* included rhymed games, morals, and alphabets, as well as some poems. The book was significant for its stated intention of including, not only "instruction" but also "amusement" and "diversion."

Newbery's contribution to children's literature was part of a larger movement toward the expansion of social, intellectual, and literary ideas as the English middle class matured during the 1800s. Much of the responsibility for this change is ascribed to the philosopher John Locke. His *Thoughts Concerning Education*, published in 1693, advocated for milder, more enjoyable ways of learning. Locke identified the value of entertainment as a motivator in learning to read, much as Watts before him had recommended the use of rhyme and meter to aid in the retention of moral learning.

The Unleashing of Imagination

William Blake expanded upon the concept of combining edification with entertainment. In the Introduction to his *Songs of Innocence* (1789), Blake concludes his first poem with the verse:

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear
And I wrote my happy songs
Ev'ry child may joy to hear.

Blake also hand-colored each poem with ornamental designs. Although he wrote in obscurity during his lifetime, his lyrical verses heralded the movement toward romantic poetry.

Much more popular, and immediately so, were the works of Ann and Jane Taylor, whose *Original Poems for Infant Minds*, published in 1804, contained one of the most sentimental and beloved poems of the century, "My Mother." The book was translated into several languages and remains best known today for the single poem "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," which was authored by Jane (and later parodied by Lewis Carroll). Additionally, the sisters wrote *Rhymes for the Nursery* (1806) and *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1808). *Original Poems* follows Watts' tradition of moral instruction, but enlivened with more energetic storytelling.

Children's poetry was progressing from its beginnings as rhyme for instruction, to a genre that elicits delight in the telling of a story and evokes a mood or revels in the sounds and rhythms of language. William Roscoe's *The*

Butterfly's Ball, published in 1807 in England, is both a poem and a children's picture book in the modern sense, where text and pictures are fully-integrated. Although weak on plot, it is attractively illustrated, containing one couplet and illustration per page. The book is significant now, not for its remarkable literary value, but for its complete lack of instruction. It seems to exist solely to delight. *The Butterfly's Ball* was immensely popular, spawning dozens of imitators and paving the way for freer development of the poetic imagination.

An even more popular and long-lived work, *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, was published in 1823 in the United States. Attributed, apparently incorrectly, to Clement C. Moore, it is still reprinted and widely read today¹. The story-poem is fast-moving, humorous, and devoid of warnings and morals. Another story poem, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842) by Robert Browning, remains familiar, but is less widely read than Moore's. It includes a clear thematic moral, but adds elements of fantasy as well.

Nonsense and the Birth of Modern Children's Poetry

By the mid-1800s, the fanciful was clearly on the rise. Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*, printed in 1846, marked the advent of the next stage in children's poetry. A collection of absurd limericks with Lear's illustrations, it begins:

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared!—
Two Owls and a Hen, four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!"

Lear later wrote nonsense stories in verse, including some that are still widely known - such as "The Jumblies" and "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" from *Nonsense Songs* (1870). Around the same time, that other master of nonsense verse, Lewis Carroll, produced *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which consisted mostly of verse parodies, and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), which contained more original verse. While Carroll was wildly inventive and satirical, Lear was a better poet. The two writers inaugurated a new era in which fantasy became prominent as a genre.

Once children's literature in general, and poetry in particular, were freed to encompass wild invention, storytelling, and fantasy, these elements took root and blossomed. In 1862, the poet and artist Christina Rossetti created *Goblin Market*, an original fairy story in verse. It was very popular and praised by critics. Her poems continue to be anthologized and reprinted. Kate Greenaway made her debut in 1878 with *Under the Window*, a collection of her own rhymes and illustrations, which became a sensation almost overnight, not only in Britain, where it was printed, but also in America and continental Europe. Printer Edmund Evans produced the book using an expensive process that yielded superior graphic results for its day. Although Greenaway wrote the verses in *Under the Window* and *Marigold Garden* (1885), she is remembered primarily as an illustrator.

Around the same time, another landmark in children's poetry, Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, was published in 1885 as *Penny Whistles*. It contains the following excerpt from a favorite poem of childhood, "The Swing":

How do you like to go up in a swing,
 Up in the air so blue?
 Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
 Ever a child can do!

Stevenson was already widely known for his essays and fiction, so his poems for children found a ready audience. His writing continues to be anthologized as well as produced in picture book format. New editions of *A Child's Garden of Verses* appear at least once per decade.

As the nineteenth century neared the twentieth, several new poets for children emerged. Eugene Field published a collection of poems called *Lullaby Land* (1897). Though popular at the time, "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" is now the only poem remembered. Fellow American James Whitcomb Riley is known primarily for "Little Orphan Annie," particularly the refrain:

"The gobble-uns'll git you
 Ef you
 Don't
 Watch
 Out!"

During his lifetime, Riley garnered considerable acclaim as a poet for children. His use of colloquialism and folk dialect demonstrate a popular acceptance of non-standard English - at least when it was used creatively for literary fun.

The 20th Century: Variety and Visuals

As the century turned, poetry for children began to develop a wider range of expression. *Johnny Crow's Garden* (1903), written and illustrated by Englishman Leslie Brooke, was a successful early pioneer of the single-poem, picture-book format. In the United States, Laura Richards frequently wrote verse for the popular children's magazine *St. Nicholas*. Her best known work is *Tirra Lirra*, published in 1932.

Around the same time, the English poets Walter de la Mare and Eleanor Farjeon wrote poetry and prose for adults and children. *Peacock Pie* (1917) and *Rhymes and Verses* (1947) are favorite de la Mare poetry collections. Farjeon's poetry books include *Eleanor Farjeon's Poems for Children* (1951); *The Children's Bells* (1960); and *Kings and Queens* (1983). The poems of Richards, de la Mare, and Farjeon are still regularly printed in anthologies and magazines for children.

Two other well-known poets from the United States - Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg - deserve a mention. Although Sandburg's *Rootabaga Stories* is probably more widely-recognized than his poetry, verses from *Early Moon* (1930) and *Wind Song* (1960) are often included in contemporary children's collections. Several picture book versions of Frost's poems exist and his work continues to be anthologized.

Still other wonderful poets include A. A. Milne, with his tender, child-centered poems in *When We Were Very Young* (1924) and *Now We Are Six* (1927), both of which were tremendously popular. Rachel Field's first book of poetry for children, *The Pointed People* (1924), had to compete with Milne's, but was well received nonetheless. Field's poem, "A Road Might Lead to Anywhere," was printed as a picture book in 1990.

Elizabeth Coatsworth, known for her Newbery Medal-winning story *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*, also wrote several collections of poetry, including *Summer Green* (1948), *Poems* (1957), *The Sparrow Bush* (1966) and *Down Half the World* (1968). She frequently incorporated poems into her fiction.

Another writer of verse, destined for fame in the United States and eventually the world, emerged in the years prior to World War II. Theodore Seuss Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss, published his rhymed narrative *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* in 1937. While most of his works favor story over poetry, they carry on the traditions of creative nonsense and verse while telling stories to children. Interestingly, this work was reminiscent of early, moral children's poetry, although the reader may be too busy enjoying the unique characters and imaginative illustrations to notice.

Giesel also contributed to the development of a genre that has become immensely popular, the beginning reader. *The Cat in the Hat*, now available in many languages, is an accepted resource for youngsters learning to read. Using limited vocabulary, simple rhyme, and extravagant imagination, Giesel expanded upon existing traditions of nonsense verse in children's literature, and older ones which used verse as an aid to learning - in this case, learning to read.

Other early-to-mid twentieth century poets for children include Langston Hughes, David McCord, Harry Behn, Aileen Fisher, and Theodore Roethke. With *The Dream Keeper* (1932), Hughes became the first African-American poet to be widely read by children.

The second half of the century brought changes to children's literature that reflected ongoing social and political transformations. Another African-American writer, Gwendolyn Brooks, broke ground with *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* (1956). Its poems illuminated the lives of urban African-American youth. Poets such as May Swenson expanded the usual boundaries of poetry by creating free verse that formed riddles, puzzles, and patterns. Eve Miriam also explored this variation, and pushed the limits of what were considered suitable topics for children. Her *The Inner City Mother Goose* (1969) caused controversy for its focus on the social problems faced by inner city children, and even garnered calls for a ban in the United States.

Poetic subjects and forms continued to broaden. An interest in cultural diversity led to the publication of more poetry by African-Americans, including

Arnold Adoff and Eloise Greenfield, the latter best known for her *Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems* (1978). Poets from other cultural backgrounds also began publishing for children, including Gary Soto, whose work reflected Latino culture; Hettie Jones, whose book *The Trees Stand Shining* (1971) focused on Native American themes; and James Berry, a Jamaican author.

Another development during the 1960s was an increase in poetry written in free verse. Karla Kuskin, Siv Cedering Fox, Sylvia Cassedy, Barbara Esbensen, and Valerie Worth, were noted for their use of the form; which was carried forward by other poets into the last four decades of the twentieth century.

Many other modern poets and writers of verse deserve mention: Hilaire Belloc, John Ciardi; Beatrice Schenk De Regniers, Paul Fleischman, Roy Gerrard, Nikki Giovanni, Mary Ann Hoberman, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Ted Hughes, Randall Jarrell, X. J. Kennedy, Dennis Lee, Myra Cohn Livingston, Phyllis McGinley, Ogden Nash, Charlotte Pomerantz, William Jay Smith, Nancy Willard, and Jane Yolen.

Dennis Lee, the first poet laureate of Canada, is best known for his several collections of children's poetry, including the hugely successful *Alligator Pie* (1974). Shel Silverstein stands out as a writer of light verse for *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) and *A Light in the Attic* (1981), both phenomenally popular. These writers carried on the humor and imagination of the nonsense tradition begun by Lear and expanded upon by Geisel. Jack Prelutsky continued the sub-genre in his many volumes, beginning with *Rolling Harvey Down the Hill* (1980). Collaborating with illustrator Lane Smith, he created *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* (1998) from notes left by Geisel.

In the United States, literary honors have reflected a revival of interest in poetry for children, as well as other contemporary trends. Nancy Willard was the first to receive a Newbery Medal for a book of poetry for *A Visit to William Blake's Inn* (1981). In 1988, Jane Yolen's *Owl Moon*, a prose poem, was awarded the Caldecott Medal. Paul Fleischman's *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* garnered the 1989 Newbery; and Karen Hesse received the first Newbery for a novel in free verse, *Out of the Dust*, in 1998.

A trend toward blurring the distinction between prose and poetry in books for children continues. Writers of recent novels in verse include Sharon Creech, Nikki Grimes, Angela Johnson, Ron Koertge, and Jacqueline Woodson. Another critically successful extension of poetry merges free verse with biography. Two acclaimed examples are *Carver: A Life in Poems* (2001) by Marilyn Nelson ongoing evolution in artistic technique and graphic capability - are evolving in and *The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano* (2007) by Margarita Engle.

Increasingly complex visual treatments of poetry - a continuation of the children's literature. The extent to which a poetry book is illustrated depends on the type of poetry book being produced. While illustrations have often accompanied poetry collections for children, poetry picture books have become more popular in recent decades. In previous centuries, the quality of the illustrations was unsophisticated compared to those produced today - and far fewer books were published.

Some critics question whether so much illustration is good for poetry – or for children. Unless carefully conceived and executed, illustrations may inhibit children’s imaginations by eliminating the need to create their own mental images, in the same way that watching too much television can stunt the imagination by never requiring its use. Defining a poem through illustration is particularly controversial when a child is first exposed to verse during their most impressionable years.

There are other problems as well. Breaking a poem’s lines in order to fit a picture book format, and to facilitate illustration, may distort the author’s intended rhythm, tone, or pacing. Book design must take into account details such as the placement of page turns, to coincide with natural pauses in the reading and avoid mutilating the poet’s carefully-crafted cadences. The poems of long-deceased authors, which are readily available in the public domain, are especially vulnerable to illustrations that contradict, overpower, or clash with the text.

Illustrated picture books of narrative poems, with strong story lines, seem best-suited to visual treatment. Examples are: “Casey at the Bat” (illustrated in 1980 by Wallace Tripp; Barry Moser in 1988; and Christopher Bing in 2000) or “The Adventures of Isabel,” humorously illustrated by James Marshall in 1991. As a poem moves further from concrete images and storytelling, into the realms of interior experience, perception, and emotions, illustration runs the greater risk of limiting and characterizing the poet’s words, rather than expanding and illuminating them.

Anthologies also reflect the trend toward visual interpretation of poetry, but because the ratio of illustration to text is smaller, they generally avoid the dangers of text distortion found in picture books. While some, such as *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children* (1983), *Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* (1986), and *Sing a Song of Popcorn* (1988), are large in size and general in scope, most collections from the 1990s concentrate on specific themes, audiences, or genres.

Another trend of the 1980s and 1990s was an increased interest in poetry for, and by, young adults. This is evident in the success of anthologies, such as those edited by Paul Janeczko and Naomi Shihab Nye; the popularity of rap music, poetry slams, and magnetic poetry; and activities such as Poetry in Motion, Poems on the Underground, and National Poetry Month - all of which encourage youth to create, perform, and publish their own poetry.

In a return to the trend begun in the 1960s, serious social issues - such as human rights, the environment, and AIDS - are being addressed in poetry for young people. Cultural and racial awareness has given way to a more global perspective that is exemplified by Naomi Shihab Nye’s highly-regarded multicultural anthology *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from Around the World* (1992).

The 21st Century: Technology and Poetry

New, interesting developments arise almost daily, it seems, from the plethora of technological and electronic formats available today. New resources, such as *Representative Poetry Online*, provide a vast database of thousands of poems and hundreds of poets writing in English (<http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/display/index.cfm>). Poetry websites designed specifically for children encourage youth to play with poetry online, learn more about it, and interact with others.² Numerous other websites, such as Boston Teachnet, Education World, PBS, Web English Teacher, and Poets House, offer lesson plans for teachers and creative poetry activities. Book/CD combinations such as *Poetry Speaks: Hear Great Poets Read Their Work from Tennyson to Plath* (2001) and *Poetry Speaks to Children* (2005) bring poetry alive using modern audio technology. Websites are doing the same. PoetryFoundation.org (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org>), Poets.org (<http://www.poets.org>), and some author websites are using this alternate form.

Through centuries of social change and technological transformation, poetry for children continues to flourish and evolve. Perhaps the core reason for this phenomenon has to do with the fact that children and poets share a capacity for perception and imagination. As long as children need to learn, and as long as vibrant poetry is presented to them, it is likely that poetry's oral roots will take hold in children, even in this age of technology. Indeed, new ways of using technology are arising to enhance poetry's relationship to the oral. The creative imaginations of both poet and child continue to expand the uses of poetry, from a powerful educational tool to a multifaceted – and multi-formatted – source of enrichment, delight, and discovery.

Notes

1. The editors of *Representative Poetry Online*, hosted by the University of Toronto Libraries, believe that Moore is not the author of the poem. Don Foster, a professor at Vassar College, attributes the poem to Major Henry Livingston, Jr. in his book *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous* (2000). (<http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poet/231.html>)

2. For examples, see sites such as *Giggle Poetry*, featuring Bruce Lansky, and other poets associated with Meadowbrook Press; poet Kenn Nesbitt's "poetry playground" at *Poetry4Kids*; *Poetry Zone*, created by poet Roger Stevens; and publisher Scholastic's "Poetry Writing With" web pages featuring Jack Prelutsky and Karla Kuskin.

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Let's Be Silly !

When Noses Bloom

Linda A. Anderson

I started life with a small nose,
tiny hands, fingers and toes;
I grew in spurts, then with a boom,
my little nose burst into bloom.

My body parts all grew apace,
except the middle of my face--
in growth it never showed a lack,
it was the leader of the pack.

It left the rest of me behind.
At first I didn't even mind;
then when its bloom was almost done,
my nose became a source of fun.

My friends tagged me with stupid names.
This was one of their favorite games--
pain comes with more than sticks and stones;
I told them, "Leave my nose alone!"

Then once my nose had reached its peak,
proclaimed by some a handsome beak,
I found its size to be a plus,
and not a thing for animus.

There are so many things to smell,
not all the noses do it well;
mine can suck in all the scents,
from fragrant blooms to moldy tents.

It keeps my lips dry in the rain,
locates a skunk and warns my brain;
all races I win "by a nose";
in winter's cold it starts to glow.

Those small nosed people now despair,
they wish they had a nose so rare!
This nose of mine has grown on me;
I'm pleased with it as I can be!

Though it won't ever be called cute--
it's too much like a yellow fruit--
at least it's left the blooming stage,
unless it grows more in old age!



Let a Smile Be Your Bumrella

Irene Livingston

Gardelia woke up feeling grundled.
She gronked and she glombed aloud.
The rain slizzled down on the windel.
She felt all deblattled and drowd.

The birds were not chippering and tweeping.
Aweesh! Went the cars slooshing by.
the day was all glompy and morky.
The clouds looked so blonk in the sky.

She dithered and dibbled and dabbled.
She played with the skampering pup.
She tickled the baby, who bibbled.
But nothing could spirkle her up.

Then poppenly out came a rainbow.
The slizzling and slooshing were done.
She sprit out the door like a leeper
And smiled in the sperkling sun.

She mentled, "I'll try to demender
That slizzling and slooshing don't last.
The sun will come sparkling and smilering,
The way it has done in the past."

Nonsense

Cynthia K. Deatherage

O for the Days when the Night-wind blows,
And the Nights when the Day-wind roams,
When Wisdom is that which no one knows,
And Knowledge is left in tomes . . .

When that which is Up is what came from the Down
And that which is Now is of Yore.
O for the Time before Time was found
In the sands of a distant Shore!

Boats

Madelyn Rosenberg

We're having boats for dinner
What a lovely thing to eat.
We're having boats for dinner
Bet I could eat a fleet.

Ocean liners, sailboats
Tugs and rowboats, too
I reckon I'll spit out the oars;
I don't eat sticks, do you?

I run into the kitchen
Just to give my Ma a squeeze
Cause we're having boats for dinner
Instead of fish and peas.

But when I open up the oven?
Not a single yacht or dinghy.
We're having boats for dinner
But they're made out of zucchini!

The Sad Demise of the Vegetables

Nicole Braganza

I lost my head, the lettuce said
A bounteous mop of green,
And someone even spilled
An agitated string of beans,
Then Potato lost an eye
And Corn Cob lost an ear,
A pink and sentimental onion
Shed a lonesome tear.
A mushy heart of artichoke,
Welled up with such compassion,
A hand of bananas was chopped off
In such a ruthless fashion,
No rib of celery was spared,
No neck of squash released,
And sad to say, this was the way
The vegetables deceased.

A Household Name

Gord Braun

there was a certain Turkish king
who liked his spices hot
among them was a condiment
he really liked a lot
for this he earned a moniker
of great and lasting fame
and that's how sultan pepper
got to be a household name



The Squash

B. L. Richardson

The squash in my garden went bump in the night.
It bumped `til it woke me. I got quite a fright.
I peeked out my window and saw a strange sight -
The squash was humongous and glowing with light.

It rocked and it rolled, made a gurgling sound,
It popped its insides out all over the ground.
The yellow bits fell in a mountainous mound
All over the doghouse of Gomer my hound.

Poor Gomer crawled out with seeds on his head,
His fur and his eyes glowed a fiery red.
The guck and the goo were all over his bed.
I washed him and put him to bed in the shed.

The squash got cooked up, sealed in Mason jars tight;
But sometimes it glows and goes bump in the night.
Whenever it does, Gomer crawls out of sight.
I no longer grow squash. Well, next year I might.

Sing Sang Song

Nicole Braganza

At the sing sang song
Where the words go wrong
And the audience all go BOO!
There's a song sang sing
It's a teacher's thing
Where they all go jibber jabber joo
At the song sing sang
All the students bang
On the piano, till spanked blue
So its sing sang song
Words go wrong
Song sang sing
Teacher's thing
Song sing sang
Students bang
A raucous squeal of a song
It's the sing sang sing sang song!

The Count-ulous Cat

Juleigh Howard-Hobson

"Daisy, my dear..." said the count-ulous cat.
 "Yes, my sweet puss?" the girl spake.
 "Times eighteen by three then take three out of that."
 "Fifty one?" said the child, "For what sake?"

"Now take fifty one more," said the cat with a smile,
 "With three more off of that, to be fine."
 "Fifty one twice is one hundred two, while
 Three more less makes it all... ninety nine?"

"Oh yes!" quoth the cat, with unfeline-ous yelp,
 "Ninety nine! Ninety nine! Oh my dear!"
 "But ninety nine what?" asked his reckoning help.
 "Why, the words, my dear child, written here."

Chefosaurus

Graeme King

A dinosaur went walking, for to see what he could munch.
 Perhaps a small triceratops would make a tasty lunch?
 Or what about a geyser-steamed pterodactyl pie?
 (But they were very hard to catch because they flew so high.)

How he wished that he could swim – he'd jump into the lake,
 And catch an ichthyosaurus, to eat with hot mudcake,
 But he was scared of water and his fishing skills were poor,
 And sweet sea creatures almost never came up on the shore .

He thought of caveman casserole, and mousse of giant spider,
 And Neolithic fries washed down with venus fly trap cider,
 A steamy soup of saurians – iguana fricassee?
 Or maybe sauté therapods, with Mesolithic tea.

A Paleolithic pasta stuffed with alligator eggs?
 Or sweet Jurassic jelly, all afloat with lizard's legs?
 Or trilobites in aspic, yum! A dinosaur's delight!
 Nothing beats a great big plate of chili trilobite!

Then his mind came back to Earth – what a funny dream!
 Stegosaurus steaks char-grilled on hot volcanic steam?
 What had he been thinking? He had never tasted meat...
 He was vegetarian and would lunch on leaves and peat!

The Moonless Night

Rolli

Oh, please.
Oh, *please!*
The moon's not cheese.
It's golden-crumbling
tummy-rumbling
crispy-flaking
hungry-making
butter-fluffy
oven-puffy
rich and tasty
PASTRY!

How do I know?
Where'd the moon go?
Well ...

You're right to be suspicious—
it was *delicious!*

Venice

Simon Leigh

Venice is sinking!
What were they thinking?
Cities don't float—
Build a boat.

Sydney Opera House

Evelyn Roxburgh

My friends all waved goodbye to me
And I set off the world to see.
The Sydney Opera House I viewed
And said, "I cannot be so rude,

"But tell them, please, they've got it wrong:
I never heard a single song.
The Opera House is wholly dumb -
I'm quite convinced it cannot hum."

I waited there all afternoon
But never heard a single tune.
I hope if I return again
It might release a short refrain.

I asked some people passing by
If they had ever heard it try;
But no, they never heard it sing
Or chant or trill or anything.

I asked a horse as last resort.
It answered quickly with a snort,
"Of course the Opera House can sing.
I hear it now. It's practicing."

He started swaying to the beat,
Then tap danced backwards down the street.
"Quick, let's depart! I have to flee
Before this madness gets to me."

I quickly hopped it on my toes,
But from the Opera House there rose
An aria as sweet and soft
As Angels singing up aloft.

It swelled and floated even higher
And sounded like a whole church choir.
The music filled my heart and ears,
And almost brought me close to tears.

I have to tell you, come what may,
The Opera House can sing all day;
And I enjoyed this magic sound -
So glad that I had stayed around!

Ode to Mystery Meals

Kimberly Hodgkinson-Spencer

My mother fed us puke for dinner
It's wrapped up in this burrito shell.
My mother fed us puke for dinner
And now I'm not feeling very well.
I told her, "This dish is disgusting!"
But all she did was yell.
She commanded me to eat
Leaving it would be a waste.
But all I could think about
Was its nasty awful taste.
There's something brown and oozing
Coming from my burrito shell.
It's sliding down my arm
With a most distasteful smell.
My mother fed us puke for dinner
I can see it plain and clear.
She leans over the table to ask,
"Would you like another, dear?"
My father will eat anything!
Dead or possibly alive
A bodily fluid or a meal this putrid.
I can't believe my eyes!
Still I am sitting here starving
But does anybody care?
My mother holds dessert
Ransom in the air...
"You'll eat your dinner or no crumbly apple tart!"
Possibly she thinks this tactic **is** pretty smart
When my little sister, snarfing her ugly meal,
Looks at me as if to say, "Hey, what's the big deal?"
I whisper, "*Our mother fed us puke for dinner!*"
Poking around inside her burrito shell,
My little sister pulls out what looks like a wiggly tail.
"How can you eat this stuff?" I wail.
My mother scolds, "You're such a fussy little girl!"
My father laughs, "What? Don't you like squirrel?"
Now I know I am going to hurl.

Do You Like ...

Mary Rand Hess

Dog food
Fish food
Moo food
Goo food
Seafood
Your food
Hullabaloo food?

Greek food
Geek food
Sunshine-rain food
Silly name food
All the same food?

New food
Zoo food
Kong Fu who food?

Fight food
Night food
Horror fright food?

Serious food
Runny food
Oh so funny food!

Back-words Walking

Irene Livingston

One rainy, sunlit midnight day,
with moonlight all around me,
a starry path was walking me;
a wandering flower found me.

It bent and gently picked me up
and smelled my pretty flavor.
It put me in its pocket then
for later on to savor.

One flower found a buzzy bee,
and gave it all its honey.
And then as I was hopping by,
I spied a watching bunny.

The whistling trees were blowing wild;
they blew the gentle breezes.
The clouds above were soft and fluffy
down around my knees-es.

So I went home and shoveled snow.
that day so hot and hazy,
While autumn rained the springtime sun.
MY BACKWARD LIFE IS CRAZY!

Tea Time

Angela Burns

In a house too near the beach
Where shell and sand play hide and seek
Betsy sweeps away the mess
And keeps her teabags neatly pressed

She hangs her kettle on the hob
And polishes her brass doorknob
But when it's time to make the tea
She just can't do it suddenly

She lifts a bag, so neat and fine
Admires each hole arranged in line
The tiny pillow's herbal scent
Just seems too good for what it's meant

But thirst at last decides the day
She needs that steaming cup of tay
In pot, eyes closed, she drops it quickly
And adds hot water, feeling sickly

And then despite her teabag fears
The rich aroma draws her near
With sighs she pours and gently sips
And Betsy's guilt is drowned in bliss.

Georgie's Pink and Perky Toes

Evelyn Roxburgh

While paddling in the rippling brook
Wee Georgie scratched his nose
And gazed upon some scaly things
That once were perky toes

"Oh pink and perky toes, my loves!"
The air he filled with wails,
"How could you now desert me
Leaving horrid, slimy scales?"

While watching now in disbelief
Scales multiplied in threes.
"Oh please, oh no, don't cover up
My lovely dimpled knees!

"Oh tickly, tickly bottom!"
The scales advanced abreast,
Then gleefully raced up his tum,
And swarmed beneath his vest.

"Oh no, its lost, its disappeared,
Please tell me to my face
Where has my tummy button gone
Of which there is no trace?

"So beautiful, so beautiful,"
He wailed and dabbed his eyes,
When shell like ears did succumb
In spite of woeful cries.

He cast himself upon the bank,
And sobbed and cried anew,
For perky toes and shell like ears
And tummy buttons too.

"Oh mummy, dearest mummy,
If served upon a dish,
Would you believe that I'm your boy
And not a blooming fish?"

Pet Trees

Geoffrey A. Landis

I think that I shall never pat
a tree as lovely as a cat;
but engineering, given time,
will breed us trees much more feline.

Instead of bark, a silky fur,
a tree with low and rumbling purr.
In the future, I will bet,
a tree will be the perfect pet.

A pussy willow meows and begs
While tiger lilies rub your legs.
Dogwood trees won't howl at night,
but bark the catwoods to a fright.

A tree will not have fleas or lice.
Although a tree will not chase mice,
There is one thing that makes trees better:
a tree does not need kitty litter.

So one day soon (although not yet),
a tree will be the perfect pet.

Who Rhymed on Monday?

Jen Finlayson

Who rhymed on Monday?
Was it you?
That was a silly thing to do
'Cause rhyming's out, they told me so,
It isn't cool, and you should know.

Who rhymed on Monday?
Was it him?
That was exceptionally dim
It's never done, it's not the Way,
Not anymore; it's old, passé.

Who rhymed on Monday?
Was it she?
How stupid can a person be?
They faxed a memo, silly female,
They even sent a note by email:

"NO RHYMES ON MONDAY!"

So who did?
I'll bet it was that rookie kid
How could he know when he was hired
A Monday-rhyme could get him fired
Or maybe it was Jane, or Frank,
Or mailroom Jim, just for a prank
Or Bill, who fills the candy up
Or Sue, who left her coffee cup
The manager, to test our poise
That troop of little girls and boys
The courier who took that letter
That lady with the Irish Setter

Oh Someone! Someone has to know!

What?
It was me?

Oh well.
I'll go.

Animal Friends

Bedtime at the Zoo

Peter Webb

Who reads the bedtime stories
To the creatures at the zoo?
Who roars them to each lion?
Who speaks kangaroo?

And if there were a reader,
What story would they tell?
Would a tale fit for a tiger
Please a rhinoceros as well?

Tell the tigers darkling tales
Of jungles green as jade,
And hungry eyes that glitter
In the dusky twilit shade.

The rhino would prefer to hear
Of skies like clear blue glass,
And great wide plains that undulate
Like endless seas of grass.

But might there be some creatures
Who dream about the new?
Of places foreign to them,
And things they could not do?

Perhaps the anaconda
Who slithers softly in the dark,
Would enjoy the sprightly stories
Of songbirds like the lark.

What do the two humped camels see,
When they close their ebon eyes?
The ice-bright land where penguins dwell?
Their aurora-curtained skies?

Do they call out, the soft koalas,
High in eucalyptus trees
For tales of fish and coral
From Caribbean seas?

But they have no storyteller,
The camel, snake and bear.
For at night the zoos are empty.
No books, or readers there.

So when the day begins to fade,
And the zoo prepares for bed,
Perhaps you could be the reader,
And share the stories in your head.

Roar tales that please the lion,
Speak or sing in kangaroo.
Who reads them bedtime stories?
When you sleep and dream, you do.

Advice on the Groundhog Sally Cook

The fat ground hog within his hole
Is wintering, just like the mole.
And yet we miss his lumbering tread,
And how he chews the flower bed.
If wakened early, he gets grumpy,
No matter if his bed is lumpy.

His eye is sharp, his teeth are pearly -
It wouldn't do to wake him early.

An Echo Gord Braun

There once was a frustrated bird
That fought with an echo it heard.
It twittered all night,
But try as it might
It couldn't get in the last word.

Second Chance

Susan Eckenrode

He came to us by happenstance
and Lori named him Second Chance
"because he needed one", she'd say.
That puppy stole our hearts that day.

His coat was filthy, caked with mud;
his open wounds still seeping blood
and yet his tail said, "Come and play!"
That puppy stole our hearts that day.

His big brown beagle eyes could see
into my soul, it seemed to me,
as if to ask, "Please let me stay."
That puppy stole our hearts that day.

He came to us by happenstance.
This puppy owns our hearts today.

Jellumbungo

Evelyn Roxburgh

My cat Jellumbungo
Is pretty near fantastic,
He reaches out a dainty paw
And stretches like elastic.

He curls up on a cushion
In a tiny little ball,
But when he leaps to catch a bird
He's nearly three feet tall.

My Kitty Cat

Ryan Gibbs

My kitty cat is black and white.
She sleeps all day and plays all night.

At dawn she knows when to be fed
And walks atop my sleepy head.

Once she finally gets her food,
She soon adopts a happy mood.

Then in the chair she likes the best,
She stretches out to take a rest.

When the watchful sun fades away,
Kitty knows it's time to play.

She hunts me down throughout the house
As though I were a hiding mouse.

She bats my pen and starts to fight,
Making it hard for me to write.

When I at last can take no more,
She hits my pen across the floor.

I go to bed and start to doze,
With kitty nibbling at my toes.

She licks my feet to makes amends,
Letting me know we are still friends.

Sven's Pen

Janis Butler Holm

Lucille has a tomcat named Sven
who snoozes on top of her pen.
When Lucille wants to write,
Sven puts up a fight--
Lucille's writing with pencil again!



A Fishy Tale

Catherine Edmunds

What are you doing, pet?
Why do you knit?
*I'm making some gloves Mum.
D'ye think that they'll fit?*

Depends who they're for dear -
They look rather small.
*They're for a wee fishy;
He's not very tall.*

A fish? For a fish, love?
Now what on earth for?
*The sea's very cold, Mum,
I've stood on the shore;*

*I've felt the wind blowing,
I've smelled the sea air.
The fish must be freezing
If they all live there.*

Well yes dear, that's true love,
I'll grant you that.
But why knit some gloves dear;
Why not a hat?

*Oh Mum, don't be stupid -
Their heads are too flat.
Gloves are more useful.
Even I know that.*

*I've seen their cold fingers
Like ice on a dish,
And that's why I'm making
Some gloves for a fish.*

Panda Moanium

Graeme King

I'm black and white, it isn't right...
I'd rather pink or green;
or maybe several shades of red
with yellow in between?

I eat bamboos and live in zoos
they feed me every day;
the people laugh and take my pic
I roll around and play.

My memories of life in trees
have faded dim with age;
And now I call it "Home sweet home"
my concrete Panda cage.

They send me mates in wooden crates
I think that's rather rude;
I'd rather be all by myself
and eat up all the food.

A bear with cheek was here this week
she said: "I'm Chi" and winked;
and then she broke the awful news
that soon we'll be extinct!

So if you choose to visit zoos
and see us Panda bears,
please wake me up if I'm asleep
and tell me someone cares!

Warts

Dick Buenger

I saw a toad beside the road.
He hopped behind a tree.
I sat real still and waited 'til
He didn't notice me.
And then I slid to where he hid
And cupped my hands to jump.
He saw me first and out he burst
And landed on a stump.
He smiled at me most merrily
And never blinked an eye.
He showed no fear as I inched near
To have another try.
I would attack behind his back
If all went as I planned.
So with a "Whoop" I made my scoop
And had him in my hand.
So happy with my new-found pet
My fingers held him, tight.
Without a doubt he'd not jump out
He lay as dead with fright.
He wore all sorts of ugly warts
Which made me lose my grip.
He stretched with glee each leg set free,
Then gave a sudden flip,
Without a fault, a somersault,
And landed 'cross the road.
He paused to croak this nasty joke,
"Grow warts - you touched a toad!"



The Moose

Neil Harding McAlister

Wise woodsmen who wander the wilds way up north
Make friends with a gangly beast
Who sups in the swamps where the slime-weeds spring forth,
Knee-deep in his succulent feast.

With soulful, brown eyes and a big, bulbous nose
The Moose gives them nothing to dread.
They use him for hat racks and hanging up clothes,
His antlers obligingly spread.

They serve him sweet strawberry smoothies to sip,
And seat him upon a settee.
The Moose guards their garments, and garners a tip
From guests who depart after tea.

Go pester your parents to purchase a Moose --
The perfect new pet for your home!
And if they're reluctant, accept no excuse:
It's something each family should own!

Bookworm

Madelyn Rosenberg

I am a little bookworm
A find-a-little-nook worm.
Sometimes it isn't easy being me.
I've no fingers to turn pages
So I've marked this spot for ages.
Someone please tell me what happens
After page one-twenty-three!

Sitting On The Ceiling

Linda A. Anderson

Think what it would be like
to be a tiny fly,
sitting on the ceiling
watching life zip by;
taking the occasional
spin around the room,
always having fly spirits,
never feeling gloom.

You would spend your whole day
high up above the floor
waiting for the moment
you can eat some more.
Sticky footed wanderings
upon every shelf--
come across some tasty crumb
too small for an elf.

After you have fed yourself
to full capacity,
time has come to study
fly philosophy:
crawl across the countertops,
soar back overhead;
take a rest and dream of food
in your ceiling bed.

Your life would be so simple
way above the crowds:
down to eat, then back up high--
mom would be so proud.
Life would be so carefree
as the house mascot--
just so no one comes along
to give you a swat!

Cecil the Three Toed Sloth

Graeme King

Cecil was a three-toed sloth, he ate a lot of leaves,
 And sometimes found a beehive full of honey.
 Cecil lived a happy life, except for just one thing:
 Every time he talked it sounded funny.

"Hi, I'm Thethil the three-toed thloth!" he'd say and make a bow,
 whenever someone new would venture near;
 and he had lots of visitors, they called round all the time,
 'cos Cecil's words were what they liked to hear.

"Thank you for the thcarlet thcarf, I think ith very nyth."
 (His visitor would laugh under his breath.)
 "How come that every prethent I rethieve from vithitorth
 ith thomething that mutht alwayth thtart with eth?"

"You'd think I'd get thum thimpathy, but I can thee their game,
 athide from thtopping by to thay good day;
 they think that thiopping for thum things that thtart with letter eth
 will give me theveral thententheth to thay..."

"I never get a handkerchief, I alwaith get thum thockth,
 thum chocolate would be good, but thadly, no...
 They thhower me with thethamee theedth and thpythee thothage
 thlitheth,
 I thank them for the prethenth, then they go.

"If only I could find a friend who wouldn't find it weird
 the way my teeth and tongue are in a meth;
 we'd have thuch fun and hang around and never, ever talk,
 and, if we did, we'd never mention eth!"



Backyard Blues

Byron D. Howell

I used to feed two squirrels in the yard -
in six short months I trained them both too well.
To earn their trust took love but wasn't hard.
I called them, they would come - and all was swell.
I never missed one day in six months time.
They ate too well and even gained some weight.
Some warned me feeding them should be a crime -
that I should stop before it was too late.
There's something to be said for let it be.
I earned their trust in six months time, it's true.
They must have thought all men were just like me,
they thought it wise to trust some others, too.
I meant well, yes - but made a big mistake.
Some think of them as pests, not friends to make.

How Doth the Little Subway Mouse

Jen Finlayson

How doth the little subway mouse
Improve the shining track
And wear the colours of his house
Upon his sooty back

How cheerfully he hunts for crumbs
How neatly winks his eye
And dreams while all the city drums
Its endless lullaby

To Catch a Rabbit

Joanne Underwood

They said to write a little bit
About the Easter Bunny;
They also said the kids would like
It more if it were funny.

They also mentioned eggs and chicks
And chocolates galore
And eating candy till you drop
And then still wanting more.

They said that I could write about
What fun it is to find
Baskets full of eggs and stuff
The Bunny leaves behind.

So here I am, and here I go;
I really cannot fail;
I'm going to start right here to write
My little Bunny tale.

Did I say "Bunny tale?" Oh gee,
I guess it would appear
That "Bunny tail" is what I meant—
That funny little rear

That bobbles up and bobbles down
When Bunny hops on by;
His great big feet and lippy ears
Can really help him fly.

He bustles here and bustles there;
His nose is all aquiver;
And if you offer rabbit stew
To me, I'll cry a river;

For you can speak of cats and dogs
And gerbils, I don't care;
When voting for my favourite pet,
It's bunnies—by a HARE!

Playful Pups

James Kassam McAlister

Man's best companion,
Adorable balls of fur,
Tumbling across the floor.
These pets prefer
To woof at the door!

Shoes they quickly fetch,
And bones they hungrily chew,
Wagging their short tails.
I haven't got a clue
Why they scratch with their nails.

Expressions tell tales.
Prize possessions pets,
Paw prints on the snow,
Like ballerinas, they pirouette
For bits of Oreo.

As playful as children,
Their feet are on the go,
Wriggling their floppy ears.
The ball you throw
Is fetched with cheer!

Bounce and pounce on mice,
Chased by hissing cats,
At night when all is quiet
They sleep on pillows and mats,
Opposite of raucous riot.

Feral Friends

Graeme King

Toby Tiger twitched his tail, said "I don't wish to boast.
I've by far the cutest, cleanest claws;
See! I keep them beautiful for buttering my toast,
How I dislike a cat with dirty paws!"

Matt the Monkey nodded, said "Bad breath I can't abide,
Brush my teeth at least ten times a day;
When there's drought, the toothpaste keeps me feeling full inside,
Furthermore it's found to fight decay!"

Harry Hippo hiccupped, said "Come on, for Heaven's sake,
Now I need to talk of tummy troubles;
I must watch my diet, I can't stand a stomach ache,
Clear the pool if I start to blow bubbles!"

Cecil Sloth said "You all think that I am lax and lazy,
Hanging from the branches like a tourist;
I have three toes on each foot, and long nails drive me crazy,
Every day I need a manicurist!"

Gale Gorilla gaped and cried, "You think that is a chore?
What I have to do each day is scary;
Beauty parlor, nine o'clock, still there at half past four,
I can't help it if I'm rather hairy!"

Sally Skunk then shook her stripes, said "I don't like to sulk,
You think you have it badly, but I know;
None of you go out and buy deodorants in bulk –
I do! I have permanent B.O!"

Timmy Tortoise tittered, said "You think you have it bad?
I walk all day as fast as my legs will;
By night I've gone a hundred yards, I know it's rather sad,
One hundred twenty, if it's all downhill!"

So every day, these feral friends, with tantrums, tears and tales,
Told each other stories sad and sappy.
If you happen on them with their whining and their wails,
Don't pity them, they're simply being happy!

My Berry Loving Dog

B. L. Richardson

I had a berry loving dog
Who'd stay beside me in the bog
We'd pick together by a log
But he became obsessed

Sometimes he'd leave without a trace
A silly smile upon his face
He'd come back later, a disgrace
An icky, sticky mess

He blended with the scenery
Fur dotted with berry debris
His tummy full of fricassee
He ate with such 'finesse'

One day he bogged down in the mud
Just fell down with a mighty thud
He lay there chewing on his cud
A picture of largess

I pulled him out, the lazy lout
"You dirty dog," I gave a shout
He hung his head down in a pout
And did not seem impressed

I had to tie him to a tree
There listen to his plaintive plea
So I could pick laboriously
Collect with some success

I later risked his doggy scorn
Perhaps a pant leg to be torn
Off leash he'd bound looking forlorn
As if he were oppressed

When we'd go home, he'd hang his head
Lay down and pout in the back shed
Just wait until he could be fed
Baking he loved no less

He'd stand and drool at the back door
Making a puddle on the floor
He'd whine and pine a little more
'Til he was in distress

I gave him pies. I gave him buns
I let him eat 'til they were done
And now he weighs a mighty ton
I fed him to excess

So now my berry loving dog
Can't even go out for a jog
He looks as big as a fat hog
It's all my fault, I guess

Bee on my Nose

R. Wayne Edwards

Oh little bee
There on my nose,
You want to sting,
I do suppose.

It is your rose
I must agree...
Did not see you,
Oh little bee.

I wanted only
One small sniff,
And not to cause
This little tiff.

You stand there in
That wicked crouch...
You won't sting me?
OUCH, OUCH, OUCH, OUCH!

Guinea Pigs

Neil Harding McAlister

Soft and lazy
Balls of fur,
Guinea Pigs
Will hardly stir.

Exercise?
They cannot bear it,
Unless to fetch
A nice, fresh carrot.

Twitching noses,
Shining eyes,
Looks of
Permanent surprise

Greet the day
With peals of glee
When each morning
They see me.

Do they really
Miss their masters?
Maybe it's just
Food they're after.

Piggies' brains
Are very small.
Maybe they
Can't think at all,

And life's just
One scary muddle
'Til they get
Their evening cuddle.

Questions only
Cause us grief.
I'll suspend
My disbelief,

And pretend
Dependency
Is a sign
These pets love me.



Terry Termite

Graeme King

Terry Termite staggered home, but not the worse for drink.
He'd been across the road - a brand new house, all pretty pink.
He'd licked his lips and thought about the nice new flavors there.
A new house here in Terry's neighborhood was rather rare!

He'd crept in through the garden and ignored a pile of sticks.
His mind on something tastier, he squeezed between two bricks.
The wall space was as black as coal, but who had need of light?
One didn't need to see when one was simply gonna bite!

He'd clambered round the termite trap - a silly Council law -
entire colonies of ants could enter by the door!
He knew all these inventions, that the humans deemed so good
would never stop a termite with an appetite for wood!

So, walking in the dark, he felt his way along the wall.
He figured he was somewhere 'tween the kitchen and the hall;
and there - the main support beam - simply begging to be ate!
He saw it in the gloom and then began to salivate.

He blew the dust away to bare the yummy feast beneath,
and then he opened up his mouth, to use his termite teeth,
then bit down on the main support, the tasty hardwood beam;
but as his teeth all cracked he knew things weren't the way they seem.

That's why he came home staggering, in need of dental care.
He found the nest and muttered words like "Danger" and "Beware!"
Old Wally White Ant nodded. He was older, and had nous:
"That serves you right for trying to eat a nice, new steel-framed
house!"

Nuts and Bolts

Peter Austin

I bought a horse; his name was Shay.
I gave him chicken soup;
He tossed his head and answered, "Nay!"
And then he flew the coop.

I tried a griddled albacore
With peppercorns and lime;
He kicked apart the stable door
And ran a second time.

Then, "Nuts!" said I, and found a store
That trafficked in brazils;
This time, he stuffed his gut, before
He headed for the hills.

Although I must admit I've known
Some pretty kooky colts,
A horse I never thought I'd own
That lives on nuts and bolts.

Scat Cat!

Sonja Kershaw

Said the child to the cat:

"Scat, black cat! Away from me!
Old black cat, don't cross my way!
You are bad luck for me, you see.
Scat, black cat! Just go away!"

Said the cat to the child:

"Why do you hate the color black?
What sort of harm can black fur do?
Love me and rub my silky back,
And I'll return your love to you!"



Emperor Penguin

She

I met an Emperor penguin once,
He was a handsome feller.
He wore a smart black full length coat,
white shirt -- his tie was yellor.

He said they stand around in pairs,
(The Arctic's is not known for chairs),
and to make sure that their eggs won't freeze
they tuck them up beneath their knees.

Sometimes while skidding on the ice
he thinks some sunshine would be nice --
cries, "I don't want to be a skater!
I'm dressed up to be a waiter!"

Squirrel Nutcase

She

West coast squirrels look well dressed,
Although they are arboreal.
In grey fur coats and off-white vests,
They're fetchingly sartorial.

That high in trees they're acrobatic,
There are no "ifs" or "buts."
But on the ground they're quite erratic -
They've all mislaid their nuts.

Bushy tailed, small hands on chests,
standing, knowing they look cute,
They're still panhandling little pests,
So just forget the fancy suit.

The Moral of the Story



The U.S.S. Delusion

Peter G. Gilchrist

The U.S.S. Delusion was the largest in the fleet,
Her Captain, the most arrogant commander you could meet.
His ship would not yield right-of-way to any on the seas,
Her passage would be anywhere her strutting Captain pleased.

One night the fog descended and removed the seas from sight.
The radar operator watched a "blip" disturb the night.
The "blip" lay dead ahead, and merely seven miles away:
If neither ship changed course then likely both would rue the day.

The Captain barked an order that demanded a reply,
"Ahoy there, unknown vessel, would you please identify?"
The unknown ship responded on the crackling wireless band,
"We are Canadian Coast Guard. Is your Captain close at hand?"

The Captain grabbed the microphone and yelled into the night,
"Direct your vessel starboard. Tell your skipper that's his right!"
The Coast Guard's cool reply was unexpected, if polite:
"Request you change direction, Sir, we have you in our sight."

The Captain couldn't fathom why the Coast Guard wouldn't turn.
His face flushed red as fire as if his skin was going to burn.
He growled into the microphone, a snarl upon his lip,
"You have a choice to make," he said. "Change course or lose your
ship!"

A silence fell upon the bridge. The "blip" did not change course.
The Captain grabbed the mike again, 'though he was getting hoarse.
"Change course at once!" he ordered, "We demand the right of way.
If you don't change direction you'll be swimming 'fore the day."

The calm response was clearly one that he did not expect:
"We won't be moving, Sir, although we mean no disrespect.
Perhaps we should have mentioned this (we just assumed you knew),
We are a lighthouse, Sir, which means it's really up to you."

Harvesting

Myra Stilborn

The binder dropped the stalks of wheat, untied...
A scattered mess, that stifling August day.
My father stopped the team, stepped down, and sighed.
The crop was ripe, and town was far away.
Removing bolts, he found a broken piece
That kept the needle from its special work.
He grabbed some haywire; that, and elbow grease
Soon had the old machine all set to perk.
Up through the years, this memory nudges me
When routine chores meet unexpected halt.
I seek the reason, then use patiently
Something at hand to remedy the fault.
What joy to move into the field again,
Releasing well-bound sheaves of ripened grain!

Look to Your Dream

Nicole Braganza

Look to your dream; reach out and touch the skies.
Let nothing fight your drive to carry on.
Don't ever let your spirit drown or die.
So will you walk ahead; you must be strong.
In every child there is a little light,
So leave the darkest nights and come away.
The sun will light our souls, and make them bright.
We will come through, we'll make a better day.
And when it's tough remember, say a prayer,
Then you will never walk your path alone,
And in your heart, know always, someone's there
To help you grow and come into your own.
So shine dear child, you are a shining star;
So shine dear child, and cast your light afar.

Pirate Pete

Graeme King

A drunken pirate staggered through the doorway of a bar.
He yelled for ale, and then began to sing:
"My Treasure Island's wall to wall with gold and riches, aaarrggh!
I dream of all the pleasure it will bring!"

The crowd all laughed at Pirate Pete, a tale they'd heard before.
This pirate was a joke, a drunken dog.
He always sung of shipwreck on a gold-infested shore,
then drifting back to safety on a log.

A Londoner, a stranger, pricked his ears to hear the tale.
He waited till the pirate stopped to scratch,
then sat down right beside him with a flagon full of ale.
He poured two tankards, looked him in the patch.

"You know the briny backwards, sailed to seven seas and back?
Seen treasure of the kind that makes men weep?
I'll help you find your treasure, man, if funds are all you lack."
But sadly, Pete the Pirate was asleep.

The stranger shook him roughly, "Don't you want to hear my deal?"
The pirate opened up his one good eye,
"Nobody here," he slurred, "Believes my Treasure Island's real."
"There's one who does," the stranger said. "'Tis I!"

"'Tis far too late for me," the pirate grinned with toothy gap,
"'Twould need a man with money and a ship;
a man with pluck to follow this here buried treasure map" -
a faded parchment there within his grip.

"I have a ship, she's riding here at anchor, fit to sail,
she's old but fast, with many vessels worse.
Now let me see your map and let me pour another ale."
The pirate answered, "Let me see your purse."

The sun was hot and glaring and the pirate blinked his eye -
its angle told a time of way past noon -
remembering the stranger who believed his drunken lie,
and given him a shiny gold doubloon.

A whole doubloon! He grinned, this year there'd be no need to beg,
'twas ages since he'd seen this princely sum.
He tried to click his heels - a clever stunt, with wooden leg -
then headed for the tavern and some rum.

"Pour drinks for all me mateys!" as he slumped upon a stool.
 "Good on you, Pete," the barman said aloud,
 "You sold another useless map, you found another fool."
 "Ha Haaaarrggh!" laughed Pete, "There's one in every crowd!"

Boomerang

Peter Austin

"I'll feed and clean it, pinky swear!"
 "You will?" "I promise!" ... "Oh, all right."
 We bought the one with tousled hair
 And chuckled at its overbite.

She bore it homeward, in a box,
 With me behind her, crimson hued,
 Encumbered, like a hapless ox,
 By bottle, bedding, cage and food...

We've owned it, now, for several weeks,
 And I've become its keeper: yes,
 The labour's mine that fills its cheeks,
 And clips its nails, and cleans its mess.

A dozen times, I've nearly said,
 "Get busy, or the gerbil's toast!"
 But something's turned my tongue to lead –
 A long departed gerbil's ghost,

That, once, / swore to nurture – *me!* –
 And did so, for a week or more,
 Until it lost its novelty
 And gained the designation, "chore."

So, now, I handle chow and muck
 Without a hint of a harangue.
 My daughter thinks she's passed the buck,
 But / know it's a boomerang.

Dragon Quest

Graeme King

The village people gathered in the square,
and heard the crier tell them in despair:
"The King is dying now, his race is run -
but as you're all aware - he has no son!"

Well, soon the word had sped throughout the town,
a quest was there, for one to wear the crown:
To best the dragon in his mountain cave,
would prove him worthy, faithful, true and brave!

The shaking of the heads was sad to see,
as one by one the young men said: "not me..."
but one young peasant nodded, pressed his luck,
the tailor's youngest son - the rascal Puck.

As Puck strode off, the townsfolk cheered him on,
then dug his grave as soon as he was gone,
they carved Puck's epitaph upon a post:
"We sent a boy, got back a piece of toast!"

Now, dragons were a match for mortal man,
but Puck knew this and had a cunning plan,
he couldn't beat the fire in dragon's throat,
so sent the scaly man-eater a note.

On Whitsunday, he strode into the court,
displayed the dragon's treasure he had brought,
acclaimed by all the bravest they had known,
Puck took his rightful place upon the throne.

So, good King Puck ruled with a loving hand,
and everyone was happy in the land,
the dragon? He was happy too, you see,
and living in the castle, secretly!

Puck's note had said that soon times would be tough,
as men invented gunpowder and stuff,
no dragon would be safe, they'd all be tracked,
far better if they signed a secret pact.

The dragon knew that Puck was quite a sage,
he needed somewhere safe for his old age,
they both got what they wanted, all was sweet,
and now the castle's warmed by central heat!



The Far Side of the Fence

Neil Harding McAlister

The dairy herd was gathered
Near the fence one summer day.
Young Gerty to the other calves
Was overheard to say,

"The grass on Farmer Potter's side
Is greener than our own.
His cows must feast all winter long
On hay that he has grown."

Old Bossy shook her head and moaned,
"It's better to stay home.
Who knows what's on the other side?
It's dangerous to roam."

But Gerty stomped and pawed the ground.
She knew what she would do.
She found a space between two posts,
And managed to squeeze through.

When evening came, the herd returned
For milking in the barn;
And Farmer Jones was short one calf,
So he raised an alarm!

Then Jones, his son and Rex, their dog
Went searching high and low.
Jones phoned the neighbors all around
To see if they would know.

A few days passed. They found no trace
Of Gerty, dead or live,
'Til Farmer Potter wheeled his truck
Up Farmer Jones's drive.

Poor Potter stood there, cap in hand,
His face looked sad and pained.
"Is something wrong, old friend?" Jones asked,
And Potter then explained:

"The story I'm about to tell
Is pretty grim, but true.
The long and short – I have a debt
That I must pay to you.

"I went to town the other day
And left my kids in charge
When fellers from the slaughterhouse
Fetched cattle from our yard.

"I thought that they had paid too much --
More money than they'd said.
But they are sure their count was right:
They took one extra head.

"I know that wanderin' calf of yours
Was never meant for veal.
A stupid accident, it was.
You know I wouldn't steal."

With that, he pressed some money
Into Farmer Jones's hand.
Jones said, "I thank you, neighbor, 'cuz
You are an honest man."

Out in the field, old Bossy sighed,
That young cow had no sense.
The grass is *always* greener on
The far side of the fence.

A Right Time and a Wrong Time to be Lazy

Byron D. Howell

There came a time to put my toys away,
to choose a path and try to be a man;
to do as much as I could with my day,
to live my life and do the best I can.
Before this time, I was so immature
I had no use for goals or true success;
though I had dreams of fortune and grandeur,
without a plan, my life became a mess.
As soon as I learned how to move ahead,
despite the fact I like to take it slow,
that's when I earned the butter for my bread.
Today, look out when I am on the go!
My idle time robbed me of self-esteem.
Today I earn the right to rest and dream.

Ambition

Cathy Bryant

On my tenth birthday, after tea,
And cards and cake and family,
My Aunt Matilda asked of me,
"When you grow up, what will you be?"

A pop star singing funky tunes?
Astronomer, observing moons?
A poet, an immortal bard!"
I thought about it long and hard.

A doctor healing hurts and pains?
A glazier mending window panes?
Or a mechanic, changing tyres,
Or a fire-fighter fighting fires?

A dancer, light upon my feet?
A farmer growing sugar beet?
So many ways to pay my dues!
But how am I supposed to choose?

An astronaut in deepest space,
An athlete winning every race,
A teacher sending kids to sleep,
A parent with a house to keep;

A driver out upon the road,
A spy who speaks in secret code,
A baker baking cakes and bread
to keep the happy children fed?

A botanist smelling the flowers,
A watchmaker creating hours,
A pianist that all come to hear?
Then suddenly it all was clear -

"My Aunt Matilda, now I see
Exactly what I want to be.
For a future of pure heaven
What I want to be is ELEVEN."

The Country Mouse in the Court of the Rat-King

Phillip A. Ellis

Upon a humble farm, a mouse
set out to make his name
by joining the Rat-King's shield guards,
to fight for truth and fame.

He bore a keen and cutting blade
of grass to trounce his foes,
and shoes of pussy-willow fluff
to warm his mousy toes.

With rose-petal for floppy hat
(for so fashion decreed!)
and vest of spider-silk, he looked
a dashing mouse indeed!

And when he left, both family
and friends from far and near,
all wished him health, success and wealth,
with dew-wine crisp and clear.

He rode upon his trusty steed--
a snail, slow but true--
out of his rustic valley home
far from his mother's view.

For weary leagues and days he rode
(to count them all would bore),
and many nippy nights as well
until his bum was sore.

And finally, the humble mouse
arrived before the gate
that led to where the Rat-King sat
upon his throne in state.

There, fierce and brave, with oakleaf glaive,
twin hamsters preened, on guard,
spake thus to mouse: "Oi, bumpkin boy,
go park it in the yard."

"Sir hamsters both," said country mouse,
"I've ridden day and night,
to serve thy glorious Rat-King, and
become, like thee, a knight."

"There's but one way," one hamster said,
"By fighting a fierce foe,
who bites and smites each Tuesday night,
with whiskers, teeth, and woe."

"Tis Tuesday now," the brave mouse spake,
"I'll show my mettle true:
show me the way this selfsame day,
so I may trounce it true."

And so was mousy brought before
the Rat-Kind where he ate
a dainty dish of poppy seeds
and pondered cruellest fate.

Around him, rat-maids calico
all swooned in sweet delight
because the country mouse was such
a brave and dashing sight.

And there, beside the Rat-King, sat
a princess fair and sweet,
a beautiful, sweet squirrel maid
whose heart swift missed a beat.

The mouse, he bowed before the King,
and squeaked, "Your Majesty,
I've come to drive away the beast
that brings thee misery."

"Brave mouse," the Rat-King squeaked in turn,
"I wish thee well this day,
for none--alas--of my dear folk
could drive this woe away!"

Around the hall, the mouse espied
a throng of noble folk--
a dormouse napped, a muskrat thought,
a gerbil jester joked.

He saw a mighty lemming jarl
who said: "I came to fight
this vexing pest that plagues the King--
let's stand as one tonight!"

And lemming proffered mouse his paw,
they shook as brothers right,
and swore: "Come death with demon breath,
we stand as knight and knight."

And so, through banquet, song and dance,
the hours turned and sped,
the night lay down upon the earth,
carousers went to bed.

Then, like death's slinking shadow vast
that swallows thin and fat,
into the hall thence crept the foe--
a fierce and fearsome cat!

Up leapt the mouse with cutting blade
and naught a trace of fear,
yet that murrain broke it in twain,
and licked from ear to ear.

Sir lemming raced across to save
his newfound, truefound friend
from turning into kitty food--
O sad, O evil end!

But cat was cunning, slick with claw:
it pinned poor lemming down,
licking its lips again with glee,
with naught one look around.

Brave mouse, he roared, and leapt and soared,
and ripped a whisker out
of pestful cat that grinned and sat,
making it twist and shout!

Away thus raced the cat in pain,
to plague the court no more,
for ever since, it dines on fish
it finds by far seashore.

Did mousy brave become a knight?
Well let me say just this:
sweet squirrel princess and prince mouse
now live in wedded bliss,

and through the land, to low and grand,
the voles all tell this tale,
except, instead of whiskers pulled,
they claim it was a tail.

Pizza Pete

Graeme King

Peter loved his pizza, and he ate one every day,
with pepperoni anchovies - too much!
but jalapeño mushrooms were his favorite, I would say,
(and olives, bacon, beef and eggs and such).

Some nights he'd hit the pizza store and watch with avid eyes
as pastry twirled and toppings towered tall.
He'd order such a masterpiece, they'd marvel at the size
as Pete sat there and ate it - box and all!

On other nights he'd use the phone, and took a huge delight
in ordering a "Pete's Enormous Thing,"
then sit in trepidation hoping they would cook it right,
and wait impatient for the bell to ring.

One night he looked out of the window up into the sky.
The moon was full and shone its silver rain;
but Peter saw it as a huge, translucent pizza pie.
A great idea formed inside his brain.

He spoke to all the cooks down at the pizza store next day.
He asked for something never seen before:
a pizza topped with *everything*, and piled the Peter way -
The Lot, Supreme, Monstera and some more!

Tomato sauce was spread, then pepperonis, chilies, cheese,
bananas and some mushrooms, herbs and rice;
then ham and apples, pine nuts and some broccoli and peas,
potato, pumpkin and a salmon slice.

Then prawns were layered, topped with garlic, olives and some nuts,
and up this pizza rose, a wonder wall!
As Peter watched it climb he felt a longing in his guts -
no pizza ever had been built so tall!

A fork lift truck delivered it to Peter's place that night.
He saw it on his kitchen bench and smiled,
then opened wide to get each of the flavors in one bite.
This pizza mountain promised to be wild.

And then he tried to swallow - and the giant pizza stuck!
It lodged in Peter's windpipe, gripped like glue.
This pizza king had run right out of greedy, hungry luck,
and slowly Peter's face turned vivid blue.

So, never look for extras. What you get in life is cool.
 Be satisfied with what it throws at you.
 Don't be a Pizza Pete, unless you want to be a fool,
 and try to bite off more than you can chew.

The Poet's Life

Gregory Christiano

When this hard day's work is finished,
 An' all seems hushed an' still,
 'Cept the soft an' gentle murmur
 Of the little muddied rill,

When the great round sun has vanished,
 In a sea of red an' gold,
 Everything looks like a picture
 That's taken from Nature's mould.

It is then my proudest moment
 As I sit surveyin' all
 With my dear ole pipe agoin'
 When the twilight shadows fall.

I sit alone an' dreamin'
 Of those days that's dead an' gone,
 When I was a little fellow
 'Bout half as tall as that corn.

Runnin' round half clothed, but happy
 'Tending to my father's cows,
 Never dreamin' of the future
 As I'd sit an' watch 'em browse.

All these things come to my mem'ry
 As I sit surveyin' all
 With my dear ole pipe agoin'
 When the twilight shadows fall.

In our small an' cozy kitchen
 My wife's a-workin' round,
 Clearing up the supper dishes,
 An' their sharp and clinking sound,

Seems to have some sort o' music
 That is very soft an' sweet
 An' I often fall to rhymin',
 Sitting on this garden seat.

Everything seems full of po'try
 As I sit surveyin' all,
 With my dear old pipe agoin'
 When the twilight shadows fall.

I could linger here forever,
 Stringin' po'try, but my wife
 Says that all these modern poets
 Live a sort of humdrum life.

But this life that I'm aleadin'
 Is just fit for any king,
 An' I'd bet he'd swap his fortune
 For a taste of this calm spring.

"This is my little kingdom,"
 I have thought surveyin' all
 With my dear ole pipe agoin'
 When the twilight shadows fall.

Lessons for Kids – Crossing Streets

jgdittier

Listen my children, I'll mention a bird
 who flits without looking, that bird is a nerd!

At corners of streets are pedestrian lanes,
 looking both ways means you're using your brains.
 That bird from the woods who is flighty and flip
 is the jay that is blue, as 'tween cars he will whip.

So if you dislike your bones broken in two,
 cross at the corner, JAYWALKING won't do!

Bogey Man Bogus

Graeme King

If scaring little children is so easy
Then why on Earth are bogey men so huge?
And why can't monsters come out in the daytime?
Why wait till dark to ply their subterfuge?

That thing under your bed must be a coward,
It needs to wait till bedtime to cause strife,
Invisible all day and when the light's on?
How could that be a nice productive life?

Take witches - they are all afraid of water,
Yet they can make a spell to part the sea?
Perhaps this aqua phobia's all acting,
So they get out of bathing frequently.

If trolls are so ferocious, mean and hungry -
Why do they always hide beneath a bridge?
They're big and strong enough to bash the door in,
And help themselves to what's inside the fridge!

A dragon breathes his fire and burns up heroes,
But honestly, he's such a greedy guy,
For why guard all those gems and gold and treasure
When there is not a thing he wants to buy?

And vampires only sleep inside their coffins?
They try and tell us they're the living dead,
But really, they could change shape every morning
And fly away a bat, back home to bed!

The next time something scuffles in the darkness,
Or shadows come together, start to creep,
Don't waste your dreaming time upon the monsters,
Roll over, close your eyes and go to sleep!



Space Race

Norma West Linder

Flying objects fill the air
People spot them everywhere
Streaking through the midnight sky
Unidentified—too high.
Some are long, like fat cigars
Some resemble shooting stars
Most are shaped like giant pies
(possibly they're full of spies).

From this UFO profusion
I can reach but one conclusion
If these nosy, alien creatures
See the worst of human features
They will turn around and race
Right back into outer space.

Old John McCraay

Sally Ann Roberts

For years they'd say Old John McCraay
Was ornery as a snake,
He'd make the children run in fear --
Their legs began to quake.

He'd shout and spit out people's names
And stomp, or scream and yell.
The dogs would slither past his house
When he went for his mail.

Not one kind word he'd speak aloud
To those who wished him well,
In time the people turned away
Where John McCraay would dwell.

They'd not perceive a smile or grin
Come from his dreary place,
Just wrinkled brows and pinching eyes
Was plastered on his face.

One morning early John McCraay
(Now this is what I heard)
Had waved a friendly "Hi, hello!"
Without a nasty word.

No insults came, no stomping boots
No slander, hate or grief.
The neighbors passing by his house
Would stare in disbelief.

No one could see the puppy
Tucked so softly in his arms,
Which had crept into his window
And wooed him with its charms.

That's all the old man needed
Was just something warm to hold;
And now they say Old John McCraay
Has a heart as good as gold.

Conservatory

Graeme King

A tortoise takes so long to get from A across to B
I watch him and I wonder why he tries...
And what about a coral polyp living in the sea?
Hes not a pretty reef until he dies.

A springbok jumps to get away from predators out there,
He leaps into the air - a graceful dance;
But these days all the lions live in zoos without a care.
Perhaps he jumps to get away from ants?

A blue whale is the largest thing the earth has ever seen,
Yet only eats the smallest, namely: krill;
If we could live inside him - what a lovely submarine,
And not a single fuel tank there to fill!

The panda bear's endangered now, it's really rather sad,
you'll find them now in cages at the zoo;
Another modern casualty, and everyone feels bad
(Well, everyone that is, except bamboo!)

I hope they all are still here when a thousand years have passed,
they really were here first, when time began;
but if we don't start learning some important lessons fast,
the next thing that will be extinct is MAN.

Not Always to the Swift

Lee Evans

The final day of swimming class
Was scheduled for a race,
To see which child would come in first
And save his parents' face.

Her little son the backstroke swam
So far before the rest,
That surely he would win the day
And prove himself the best.

But as he swam he glanced above
His shoulder to the sky,
Then slowed down, floating on his back,
A dream before his eyes.

And everybody else swam past,
Too much intent to pause
Before the finish line, to see
Just what the matter was.

But when the race was over with,
His mother asked him, "Dear,
Whatever were you thinking of
That made you dawdle there?"

"Oh, Mom," he smiled angelically,
"Up yonder in the sky
Was such a lovely golden cloud,
I couldn't pass it by.

"I lay there on my back and seemed
Along with it to run,
Just soaring into seas of blue,
Toward the rising sun!"



The Swing of the Jungle

Graeme King

The Jungle King was deep in misery,
'cause when he tried to swing from tree to tree
he'd end up on his bum, for Heaven's sake -
as every vine he swung upon would break!

The jungle creatures whimpered at the sound,
that awful thud as he fell to the ground.
They tried but couldn't find a thing at all
to help with vines that caused the hero's fall.

His wife was sadder now, not full of mirth:
'twas bad to see her man fall down to earth.
He'd walk home bruised and battered every day
(or run, if he met lions on the way.)

The weeks went by, and things got worse, you see:
They had to leave their house up in the tree.
The ladder broke as he began to climb.
She laughed - but that was this week's seventh time!

A pigmy potions doctor came, forsooth.
He mixed a tincture: candied lion's tooth,
and powdered claw from forty feral dogs
with monkey gland and sweat from seven frogs.

He told the jungle beauty what to do:
infuse the foul concoction in a stew,
ensure her husband ate it every night.
In three days things would start to work out right.

That very day she cooked a fricassee
with tail of crocodile and rhino knee.
He ate the lot, then gave a strangled shriek,
and sat upon the toilet for a week!

A fortnight later, everything was sweet.
No King of Jungle walking on his feet,
he swung from vines, he'd stopped the falling spree!
They moved back to their home up in the tree.

At sunset, as they sat there, hand in hand
and smiled across their lovely jungle land,
he thumped his chest and gave his mighty yell,
convinced that he'd escaped a voodoo spell.

His wife was jungle savvy, knew the score,
and laughed inside to hear her husband roar.
He'd thought it was a spell and that was that -
no need to tell him that he'd been too fat!

Bits and Pieces

A Trek Through The Himalayas

Srinjay Chakravarti

The journey lasts for days and days.
We trek up valley, hill and slope,
We carry with ourselves the hope
To traverse strange, untrodden ways.

We enter now a world of clouds.
Along the way we hear the call
Of mountain wind and waterfall.
The pallid mist is spreading shrouds.

At last we reach the final peak.
The summit beckons us to come
The air is cold, our feet are numb.
We climb to reach the goal we seek.

The path is steep and narrow there.
It snakes its way -- these stairs of stone
Now mark the route we make our own.
The sunshine gilds the lucid air.

The peak is stark with gelid snow.
We look where sky and earth have merged,
From high above. Our souls are purged.
Forgotten lies the world below.



Soon Scarum Stiff

Evelyn Roxburgh

Deep in the depths of the Woolly Wood
In a cavern deep in a cliff
Lives a ragged old hag with slobbery lips
And her name is Soon Scarum Stiff

Above the door of her horrible haunt
Hangs a sign advertising her skills -
Potions and lotions whipped up in a trice
And certain to cure all your ills

Her magical spells she keeps in a book
All tattered and spotted with bile,
And a rabid old rat keeps guard every night
While sharpening his fangs with a file

One wet wintry night, that crinkly old crone
Shouted and screamed and kicked
For the magical spells in the old battered book
Just couldn't be found- they were nicked!

She gathered together the cats and the trolls,
The frogs and fleas in her home
And sent them out in the wide wicked world
To look for the magical tome

Far away and further away
They searched the dingles and dells
Till there in the hole of a short sighted mole
They found the magical spells

In triumph they marched, two by two
The frogs, the fleas and the cat
Till they found the road to the Woolly Wood
That led to the haggard old bat

But the horrible hag had faded away
In the cavern deep in the cliff
With the loss of the spells from the magical book
She forgot how to Soon Scarum Stiff

Hip Tips For Camping Trips

Irene Livingston

YOU'RE GOING OUT CAMPING?
Well, great, you'll have fun.
But listen! There's safety!
NO WAIT! I'M NOT DONE!

See, first there's the getting there.
Yeah. In the car.
Okay, you're a comic!
But don't go too far!

Don't poke at the driver,
and yell HOLY COW!
You'll land in the DITCH!
I can just see it now!

Hey, FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT.
You've heard it before!
We don't want to lose you.
AND LOCK UP THAT DOOR!

Your arm out the window?
Uh uh. I think NOT!
Along comes a bus;
look! No arm! Not so hot!

Well now you've arrived.
You can gaze at the trees.
Don't climb on thin branches.
Just strong ones, PUH-LEASE!

I know you get hungry.
What's new about *that*?
But leave those strange berries
right there where they're at!

A campfire is cool,
but now, don't forget:
put out all the embers.
You *knew* that, I bet!

And pour on the sunscreen!
A dumbbell you ain't!
We don't want your skin
peeling off like old paint!

Remember your life jacket.
Who wants to drown?
It helps when your boat
is afloat upside down!

And swim with a partner.
It's no time to say,
"I like having solitude."
Later! OKAY?

I'm finished. Go camping!
You got all of that?
Have fun! Like FANTASTIC!
And hey! Wear a hat!

A Home By The Sea

Patricia Louise Gamache

Take hold of my hand and I'll wish you away
To a place in the sun, where porpoises stay,
A home by the sea just a whisper away,
Where seabirds and gulls majestically play.

And when you've grown tired and begin to complain
Take hold of my hand 'til we're home once again.
We'll dance through the spray with the breeze at our heels,
We'll stop for a time to cavort with the seals.

When the call of the waves comes up from the deep,
And the touch of the sea mist lulls us to sleep,
We'll make that same journey, you'll go there with me,
We'll ride our seahorse to a home by the sea.

The Composition Teacher Addresses His Class

Joseph S. Salemi

When naming things, you have to use a *noun*;
A *verb* shows action or a state of being.
An *adjective* describes--that is, marks down
The qualities of objects that you're seeing.

An *adverb* tells you how, or else how soon
A deed is done--say, "painfully" or "fast."
When placed with adjectives they help fine-tune
Descriptive force, like "absolutely gassed."

A *pronoun* takes the place of proper names
Or else alludes to antecedent things.
A *preposition* points, and always frames
The noun or noun-linked phrase to which it clings.

A *participle* emanates from verbs
And functions as a hybrid in good diction.
It can take past or present form, and serves
To add a tense-based nuance to depiction.

Conjunctions tie together words and clauses;
They also can disjoin by act of scission.
Like plus and minus signs, they marshal forces
For union, separation, or division.

An *article* is just an honorific
You put before some nouns so we'll discern
Whether your focus on them is specific
Or just a passing glance of unconcern.

An *interjection* is a mere effusion--
A word you blurt out from your guts or heart
In rage, joy, spite, emotional confusion...
It stands alone, syntactically apart.

These are the parts of speech that make up discourse,
At least for folks in literacy's fold.
So if you're hoping to get by in this course
Don't give me any backtalk -- *learn them cold*.

Music to our Ears

Peggy Fletcher

Small trumpets play a yellow song to Spring
while nodding snowdrops keep the tune in place.
Bright lavender lilac dances out its theme
as drums of April rain beat down, sun waits
behind conductor cloud, its dark baton
still poised to bring out thunderous applause
as audience of earthworms, birds, a throng
of honking geese, of cedar filled with dove
that coo appreciation for shrill throats
that signal end of Winter's bleak refrain
and usher in sweet symphonies of notes
that blend these concert voices, call their names.

For who in Springtime past has never heard
the brilliant encore of Earth's budding world.

Dress Up Day in May

Norma West Linder

Sabbath morning, gloomy, grey;
In a downpour, branches sway.
Birds seek shelter, puddles fill,
Raindrops pound our windowsill.

Don't be grouchy—wait with me.
Shortly, we'll go out to see
Yellow tulips, washed and pressed,
Shining in their Sunday best.

The Cool One

Myra Stilborn

The wind is wicked and wild today;
the prairie grass is shaking.
The half-grown wheat is a rocking sea;
the aspen leaves are quaking.
The hawks are battered in the sky,
their angry screamings muffled,
while thistle binds her gorgeous hair
and meets the day unruffled.

The Scarecrow

Amy Hagerty

I once saw
A man made of straw.
He stood outside all day.
He had nothing to say -
He just kept the crows away.



If Only

Neil Harding McAlister

If only I could spend my time in leisure,
 And never work to earn my daily bread.
 If only I had found a buried treasure,
 A sybaritic life I would have lead.

Or what if I had been that treasure's owner?
 A pirate bold, on distant, tropic seas --
 A bright, green parrot perched upon my shoulder,
 A buxom wench ashore to wait for me!

If only I had such a girl to love me!
 If only I were charming, rich, or fair!
 If only I could be a few years younger.
 If only I still had a head of hair.

If only I had held my tongue when angry!
 If only I had spoken up in time!
 If only I had run a little faster!
 If only I'd been standing first in line!

If only I'd been born to wealth and power,
 I know I could have been a mighty king,
 With bags of pearls and rubies in my coffers,
 And fingers all bedecked with golden rings.

You'd find me living in a gorgeous palace
 With lofty towers climbing to the sky,
 I'd be the master of a thousand servants --
 If only pigs had wings, and cows could fly!

The Dusky-Leaf Monkey

Rolli

The dusky-leaf monkey had come from afar,
 Curled up in the lid of a cinnamon jar.
 He sailed the pale ocean on lily-moon beams,
 To sprinkle our noses with sweet-smelling dreams.
 And now, the foul nightmares will vex us no more—
 Just lavender sighs, and sweet peppermint snores.
 It's wond'rous, it's strange what the little one did,
 Our dusky-leaf friend, in a cinnamon lid!

The Christmas Tree That Saved My Life

Sally Ann Roberts

Ma put our coats and hoods on tight,
And sent Dad, Sam, Joe and me
Into the woods so that we might
Find a big tall Christmas Tree.
"Try to get a nice one, Dan!"
She hollered out the door to Pa,
"Well try to do the best we can!"
He hollered back, and waved to Ma.

The winter's breath was sharp to feel,
The snow was deep and cold on me.
I didn't mind; we climbed the hill,
For we were going to get a tree!
Sam and Joe went far ahead,
"We'll spot one first!" they both called back,
Pa laughed and sighed, "We'll see." he said,
"We'll see who really has the knack."

Pa winked at me, I smiled at him.
"Come on," he said "It isn't far.
Over there so tall and trim,
Is where I think some good ones are."
We walked a ways, my eyes grew wide.
The prettiest trees I'd ever seen
Grew down the trail and on each side --
Some small, some tall, some in between.

We looked around through all the trees,
And tried to choose which one was right
To take and cut it down with ease,
And set it up for Ma tonight.
Pa and I walked separate trails,
He called and said, "Don't go too far!
If you find one, just give a yell,
And tell me truly where you are."

"Okay!" I called. I hope I win!
"I want to find it first this year."
I thought as I walked 'round the bend,
I'm sure to find a good one here.
The wind was cold, the sun was bright,
Snow was falling down on me.
I searched and searched with all my might,
I prayed that I would find the tree.

Just then I slipped and rolled downhill,
I could not stop, I felt so stiff.
My thoughts cried out, I cannot feel,
Then almost fell down Campbell Cliff.
I reached out for a firm hard grip,
By thinking fast I'd grabbed a limb,
And held on tight so's not to slip,
And called to Pa and cried for him.

I saw the limb I held so tight.
I was so scared, but then surprised,
For I held a tree all snowy white,
And tears began to burn my eyes.
It's trunk was bent and sort of small,
its twisted arms leaned in the snow.
I didn't mind it wasn't tall,
For somehow it just seemed to know.

"I'll take you home with me tonight,
I'll take you from this cold and snow."
Then Pa cried out, "Are you alright?"
"Are you okay?" called Sam and Joe.
"I guess I am," I said through tears,
"Boy what a scare it was for me!
I hoped that you would find me here -
I've found the perfect Christmas Tree."

Pa picked me up where I'd fallen,
And brushed me off a little bit.
"Son, are you sure when you were callin'
That in our house this tree would fit?
With tender branches bent and low,
A twisted trunk; a sorry sight,
Deeply buried in the snow.
And Son, you think this tree is right?"

"Oh Pa!" I said through tearful eyes,
"He's rather bent with hopeless strife,
But this small tree, to your surprise,
Was strong enough to save my life.
He held me close till you came here,
All trembling cold and pretty stiff,
If it weren't for this tree so dear,
I would have fell down Campbell Cliff!"

We took it home and set it there,
As that long day turned into night.
It stands behinds Ma's favorite chair
With decorations beaming bright.
"Well, everyone! The supper's done!"
Called Ma, who held the turkey knife.
But I'll recall for years to come,
The Christmas tree that saved my life.

The Art Lesson

June C. Horsman

"Class," said the teacher,
"Let's draw a tree,
Look out the window
Don't look at me."

The samples were good
Except for young Joe's.
He stayed after class,
The rest got to go.

The teacher asked softly,
"Is this your sheet?"
"There's clouds and a bug,
There's mud and a leaf."

"Oh", said the boy,
"Have you never hung
High on a branch
And looked at the sun?"

"Have you turned upside down
And swung by your knees,
And hid in the leaves
Of a big apple tree?"

"Discovered a nest,
Or captured a bug,
Or carried home blossoms
That brought you a hug?"

The teacher's smile grew.
Now she could see
The things she was missing
When she drew her tree.

Flutters of Thought

Susan Eckenrode

I wish that I could wrap my words
around each fleeting thought
that flits and flutters through my mind,
a moth that won't be caught.
If only it would light awhile
and rest its restless wings,
I'd wrest the words to weave cocoons
to hold such lovely things
as poetry and lyrics to
the tunes that float through time
and touch the hearts of all who hear
with magic in their rhyme.

Star of the Week

Julie Thorndyke

That Martin has his picture on the wall
beside the teacher's name, all framed in glass.
The sign says he's the best one of us all,
for this week he's the star of Miss Wright's class.
When will it be *my* turn to be the star?
I learnt my spelling - and I always win;
when teacher has a quiz - I'm first by far.
I'm quiet and you wouldn't hear a pin
drop when I work to add and multiply.
The nature table has my insect jar
of beetles, moths and one peculiar fly
I captured late last night beneath dad's car.
I shined my shoes, I sit so mild and meek
Oh, *when* will I be star kid of the week?

Wander-lust

Cynthia K. Deatherage

Ancient mountains tall and grim
Beckon me from hearth and kin.
Leave the dale and leave the bowers.
Follow stream and mountain showers.

On and on I journey on,
Following a mountain song,
Winding down through valleys deeply,
Climbing up through stone-hills steeply.

Past the moors and past the streams.
Follow on to pathless dreams.
One foot falls before the other,
Roaming hills bereft of brother.

Ceaseless wander never ends,
Drawn on farther by the winds.
Searching, seeking legends long told,
Hunting gold in phantom strongholds.

Matchless treasure now grows dim.
Mountain song is cold and grim.
Weary footsteps yearn for hearthstone.
Leave the road and shun the unknown.

Dream-led wander-lust is o'er.
Turn the step to home once more.
Leave the streams and mountain showers.
Rest with loved ones in the bower.

Myth Defied

Angela Burns

Magnificent in ancient lore
Elongated head to tail
Slitted eyes and sharpened claws
Fiery breath and iron scales
Razor teeth in massive jaws

Mountain caves became their lairs
Hoarded treasure lined their bed
Wizards, scoundrels, heroes dared
To face the beast, and test its dread
Their nameless bones were littered there

Which land first saw these giant worms
And felt the heat of fire drake's flame
Which bard first sang and others learned
Those fearsome tales, no two the same
And passed them on to us in turn

Rampant on heraldic shields
Gilt in brightly-painted texts
Stitched in hues from red to teal
Carved for kings eternal rest
Myriad forms made legends real.

Extinct they are, or so we're told
Defeated in their rocky heights
They were so few and always old
Perhaps they were too wise to fight
Escaping while we sought their gold

Alone of mythic beasts it thrives
Invincible, they still regale
Majestic under dreamer's skies
Where wit and wisdom never fail
Not age nor fiction dims their eyes.

How do they tempt with lizard grins
Is there some magic at the core
A whiff of brimstone on the wing
Can mesmerize us evermore
In sly revenge, the Dragon wins!

In a Book of Fairy Tales jgdittier

Once the summer sun was hot,
now with winter, it is not.
Reddened faces, icy vales,
in a book of fairy tales ...

Frozen spears of glist'ning ice,
now the fireplace doth suffice.
Better hear of ships and whales
in a book of fairy tales ...

Bees and butterflies abound,
buzzing is the only sound.
Ride the rails or coast with sails
in a book of fairy tales ...

Talking sheep say more than "baa."
Read to me, both nurse and Ma.
Quails in swails, tails on snails,
in a book of fairy tales ...

Each outlandish thought I think
fills a page before I blink.
Magic swords and dragon's scales,
in a book of fairy tales ...

The Summer Garden

Juleigh Howard-Hobson

Snap dragons grow tall in the summer sunlight
In reds, sunny yellows and even snow whites,
While down near the warm earth the short pansies grow.
With violets and blues and bright pinks the blooms show.
Foxgloves and primroses, one short and one tall,
Hold out purple flowers to bees, one and all.
Daisies and poppies turn up their sweet faces
To follow the sun, as they mark the day's traces.

Dandelion

Dick Buenger

The dandelion's yellow
In the face in the spring,
A perky fresh fellow
With green serrate wing.

When summer grows warm
He wears a lace crown,
A feathery form,
That is softer than down.

The wind's bold caress,
Will entice it away.
With gentle finesse
It will float in display

And softly, like snow flakes
Without any sound,
Like frosting on cake
It will cover the ground.

Song of the Railwaymen

Tony Newman

Blowing off as, last door slamming,
Waving guard gives "right-away."
Whistle shrieks and wheels slip madly,
Then grip – and we're on our way.

Clattering 'cross chaotic junction,
Flanges singing as they bite,
Sinews flex and blast comes brisker,
Station's slipping out of sight.

Whirling motions lightly clinking,
Chimney belches roiling steam,
Panting beat and rail-joint rhythm,
Hypnotizing, like a dream.

Flickering trees and poles and hedgerows,
Footplate swaying as we fly,
Children sitting on the fences,
Wave at us as we rush by.

Underfoot the crunchy coal-dust,
Driver checks that signal's "off."
Fireman feeds the roaring firebox,
Driver Wentworth, Fireman Gough.

Smell the oil, the steam, the coal-smoke,
Down the gradient let 'er rip,
Quarter-mile-posts flashing rearwards,
Telegraph wires rise and dip.

Bridges under, bridges over,
Stations derelict and dead,
Signal boxes, signal gantries,
City outskirts just ahead.

On with hat and on with raincoat,
Wrestle luggage from the rack.
Don't forget your old umbrella,
Dogs and bikes in van at back.

As we coast into the station
Windows open, out heads pop,
Here we are: your destination.
Keep the doors closed 'til ... we ... stop.

The Magic Tricycle

Graeme King

My folks gave me a tricycle for Christmas '54,
Course, it was a second-hand one, we were fairly poor.
Dad was gonna paint it, but it wasn't meant to be,
I had no love of colours, and the rust was fine by me.

One pedal had no rubber and it had a crooked wheel,
The seat was hard and weathered and had lost that leather feel,
But I thought it was splendid and it made my world complete
As every day I rode my magic trike along our street.

Oh, yes, that trike was magic, more than any witches' brew,
No wizard's wand could conjure up the things that it could do,
Each time I sat upon the seat the world would fade from me,
I'd ride into the places only four-year-olds can see.

My horse would snort and shiver as the battle lines were drawn,
Two armies facing death across a thousand-metre lawn,
I'd shout out "Charge!" and lead the men into the mad melee,
How they'd cheer as I rode in, and always saved the day.

I turned the shields to full, the phasers firing at my back,
The Zurkons had been hiding and they'd launched a sneak attack.
I switched it into stellar drive and warped around behind them,
And phased them to dimension X where no one else would find them.

Von Richthoffen was squarely in the crosshairs of my gun:
I'd laid a clever ambush hiding high up in the sun.
As he spiraled Earthward, his black smoke clouding space,
I headed for my airfield, to the chaps who called me "Ace."

I'd shout, "All hands on deck, ye swabs! Make every inch of sail!"
A merchantman was running fast, across the starboard rail;
I, Captain Blood, would run it down, I'd bring them to their knees.
My Jolly Roger relayed fear across the seven seas.

I lay down low, along my horse, to make the target small.
The arrows flew around me and I heard the whooping call;
A hundred mad Apache braves, oh, what was I to do?
Ride like hell across the West, the mailman must get through!

I put my whip away, I'd never hit this thoroughbred.
We still can win this race if I ride hands and heels instead.
Around the final turn I nudge him up another place,
The crowd's all cheering at the post – I know I've won the race!

Oh, yes, that trike was magical, and now that I have grown,
I still recall adventures that a boy had on his own;
And sometimes when life closes in (well, nearly every day)
I wish I had my tricycle, so I could ride away.



The Weather Report

James Kassam McAlister

I looked into the sky one day:
It seemed a storm was on the way!
At morning there had been no sun;
By afternoon it had begun.

For wintertime, the heat was high.
The dark clouds, spread across the sky
Like misty blankets, blue and grey,
All dark and heavy, hid the day.

A storm was coming, cold and wet,
And all my plans would be upset
By hail and snow - or rain and lightning;
But either way, it would be frightening.

Several cloud types I could spy
As I stared up into the sky -
The stratocumulus near the ground,
While altocumulus high were found.

Cumulonimbus clouds piled high,
Dark and towering in the sky.
All these cloud types grouped together
Showed there'd be some nasty weather!

Though I had made big plans that day,
A wicked storm was on its way;
And then it broke - and so I sighed,
Because I had to stay inside.

Growing Up

Odds-on Love

Joanne Underwood

Love's what makes the world go round
(At least that's what they say)
And Mom agrees, but Daddy says
It's Science all the way

And Mummy says my nose will grow
If e'er I tell a lie
And Daddy says that she should know,
But then he won't say why!

And Daddy thinks that it's okay
To eat before my dinner,
But Mummy says it isn't, so
How come she isn't thinner?

They often seem to be at odds
And yet they always smile;
When I get married later on,
I hope I have their style!

Band Mates

Joanne Underwood

Michael wants to learn to play
Guitar and have a band.
Michael wants to be a star,
The finest in the land.

Stef will join him on the sax;
The brothers won't be fractious.
I wonder how they'll do it though:
They never like to practice!

For My Daughter

David Gwilym Anthony

It's funny how I never saw you grow.
I seem to miss what's nearest as a rule,
far too preoccupied - a busy fool
blind to the way the seasons come and go.

What shall I give since now you're going too
and will be gone a while? Although you're brave
and self-assured, I know I rarely gave
a sign to show how proud I was of you.

I give it now, with love; but love's no gift:
it's yours by right. Because you're going far
I'll give a gentle light to be your star,
and all my hopes to hold when life's adrift.

I'll give them all, though all I have would be
no gift beside the gift you were to me.

The Garbage Man's Lament

B. L. Richardson

Whenever I go driving by
Collecting garbage on the fly
I hope you're happy tucked in bed
Not out collecting junk instead

Forgive me if I do complain
The days I go out in the rain
Or when it's too cold for a dog
You may hear foul dialogue

But I must keep your curbside clean
No trace of garbage will be seen
When you look down your street outside
Think of the garbage man with pride

My Mother Made a Snowman

Elizabeth F. Hill

My mother made a snowman on
A wet November day
She shocked me when I asked her to
Come out with me and play

The Beetle fully loaded, she
Would pick me up from school
And then I'd do my homework for
It was my parents' rule

Perhaps it was the first snowfall
First hint of winter weather
That let her throw the rule away
And had us play together

We bundled up in winter wools
Pulled on our knitted mittens
Donned vivid scarves in red and blue
And boots our feet could fit in

Together we rolled up the snow
So white and wet and sticky
That bulbous head, it weighed a ton
We had to lift it quickly

We found two sticks for stumpy arms
Some stones for eyes and teeth
More rocks to girdle his great gut
Protruding underneath

At last we placed a corncob pipe,
A hat of old black felt
We cried into hot chocolate then--
We knew that he would melt

BUT

My mother made a snowman that
Was better than a toy
I'll think of it forever for
It filled me with such joy



My Sister

Frances Hern

How can my sister Abigail
take so long in the shower?
I've waited but to no avail
for over one whole hour.

There isn't much of her to clean,
she's only six years old,
and when I get my turn to preen
the water will be cold.

Rainbow's End

Sally Clark

At the end of the rainbow,
I thought I would find
A bucket of quarters
And nickels and dimes.

Too heavy to carry,
I thought it might be,
So I took along friends
On the journey with me.

To the end of the rainbow
We followed the course,
Our heads full of dreams
That we'd find at the source.

Though empty the bucket
Of money or gold,
We found greater treasure
In stories we told

Of traveling the distance
Through hill and through vale;
The prize we'd discovered?
That friends never fail.

Party Time

Joanne Underwood

Hooray, hooray, today I'm six,
And soon I will be eight.
Mummy says she's going to help
Me really celebrate,

For birthday parties are such fun;
I wish I could have more—
Chocolate cake and games and things
Could never be a bore.

My mummy sometimes says they are,
But I know she is teasing;
I'm sure that entertaining kids
Is one thing she finds pleasing.

She always says she doesn't mind,
That she is happiest
When waiting at the door to greet
Each small unruly guest.

And when they accidentally spill
Their drinks upon the floor,
Mummy says that it's okay
And then she gives them more.

And when they all decide that they
Don't want to eat the food,
Mummy mutters to herself,
But all I hear is "rude."

And when they all forget to say
Their thank-yous and their pleases,
Mummy says to never mind,
They'll do it when hell freezes.

Yes, Mummy says a party
Every day would suit her fine;
She also says sarcasm's lost
On children under nine.

Little Man

Patricia Louise Gamache

I'm growing old before my time
I know I'm looking older
I'm giving up this age of mine
I'm even feeling bolder

My future seems so very clear
Although at times uncertain
I am surprised to find it's here
Like fog behind a curtain

Most days are spent in discontent
I wonder what's the matter
I then discover what is meant
I'm mad just like the Hatter

I carry books for Betty-Ann
And quickly must recover
Her curl has brushed across my hand
I'm startled to discover

A feeling I've not had before
Something I cannot see
A malady I can't ignore
So what's come over me?

I try to tell her all my thoughts
Instead I choke and stutter
Then I decide to share them not
But all the while I mutter

I wonder what is wrong with me
My tongue is like no other
And just as soon as I can see
I run home to my mother

And even though I try to be
More like the other men,
I feel an ache inside of me:
Says Mom, "You're only ten!"

Sweet Girl

Patricia Louise Gamache

I need no fond reminders
Of when my girl was born
I need no stuff in binders
Or pictures bent and torn

I only need to watch you grow
And guide you every day
I only need to let you know
I'm with you all the way

And when some day you're flying free
And I'm left here alone
I know the wonders that you'll see
At places still unknown

But just for now I'll cherish you
And kiss a dampened curl
I'll let my love watch over you
And know you're my sweet girl.

Only One

Ian Thornley

My love, the cat may have nine lives
And it may squander eight,
And leave its living to the last
Before it's all too late.

But you, my love, have only one,
Just one long summer's day,
To make mistakes and learn from them,
To love and work and play.



An Ethereal Visit

J. Graham Ducker

While I cleaned up my daughter's room,
A fairy came to me.
She spoke of all the wondrous times
And all the cups of tea.

She sat there on the music box
In dainty flimsy gown
With tiny rings on tiny hands,
And toes that dangled down.

I asked her why she had appeared
And why she'd come today.
She said I should be tolerant
Towards my daughter's play.

"Children are more sensitive
Toward my mystic kin.
They know that they are safe with us --
Pretending's not a sin.

"We're only here a few short years,
And then we're gone for good.
Her future, then, is up to you --
And it's called parenthood."

When kindergarten time was o'er,
I hugged her close to me.
We spread her plastic dishes out
For endless cups of tea.

She introduced me to her dolls
And told me all their names.
We put each other's makeup on.
We played her little games.

Connection that we made that day
Is cherished memory.
I am so thankful for the time
A fairy came to me.

The Freshman

Peter G. Gilchrist

I was pleased and excited and proud, truth be told,
as I walked arm in arm with my wife.
He stood tall and erect, and at eighteen years old
was beginning the next stage of life.

As the residence rang with refrains that remind
and the memories prompted a smile
we departed the dorm and we left him behind
and meandered the campus awhile.

There's a soft satisfaction that settles the soul
when you're pleased with the man that he is
and as parents you feel you've accomplished your goal,
although most of the credit is his.

But tonight I'm uneasy. This house is too still
and the dog keeps on checking the hall.
There's a hole in my home where my son used to be
and I can't say I like it at all.

Speaking Up

Ian Thornley

It's almost always best, my love,
To listen more than talk,
And see if you can hear a song
Above the general squawk.

But rarely comes a time, my love,
When silence seems as wrong
As what you see and what you hear
Among the general throng.

And those will be the times, my love,
When you must speak up loud
And suffer jeers and growling dogs
To reason with the crowd.

The Little Pup

B. L. Richardson

Sometimes on the road
Of a growing up pup
He meets a big monster
That trips him right up

As he looks for a way
To go over and 'round
He gets cut and gets bruised
Or knocked to the ground

The pup he fights back
With his teeth and his nails
He thrashes the monster
Until he prevails

More monsters await
To attack him at night
But he's a strong pup
Always ready to fight

He climbs a huge hill
And barks from the top...
"I'll give all you monsters
A walloping BOP!"

So as the pup grows
And gets stronger each day
He beats all the monsters
Right out of his way



Bunkbeds and Brothers

Elizabeth F. Hill

Although the beds were very old
When first they did appear,
It didn't matter for us boys,
Who'd needed them a year.

Our parents were so thrifty then!
(Or one might say quite tight!)
To buy their children brand-new beds
Just didn't seem quite right.

At first the beds were boring things—
Just furniture – no more
But when they made them into bunks,
It thrilled us to the core.

We boys took over right away
Hung blankets for a fort
Pretended we were on a ship
And heading for a port.

At first it was smooth sailing, but
the seas then grew much rougher.
It suddenly came clear to us:
We both desired the Upper.

My brother kicked and pinched me, aimed
A left hook at my nose,
And when I tried to kick him back,
I nearly broke my toes.

My mother said, "Don't touch him, dear,
For he's your little brother.
And he's the only one you have;
You'll never have another."

Just then my brother shoved me, and
I toppled to the floor.
My mother got quite angry and
she shooed us out the door.

When bedtime rolled around at last,
While watching television,
Our mother said we needed straws
To make the darn decision.

My parents let my brother be
The first of us to choose.
He smirked at me and drew his lot.
He knew he could not lose.

And thus it seemed like justice when
The one whose choice was first
Was forced to take the lower bunk
And have his bubble burst.

So I was just ecstatic as
I climbed into my berth,
And not at all suspecting of
My little brother's mirth.

As soon as I was settled in,
The bed began to bump.
My brother kicked my mattress hard
And made my whole world jump.

At first I was a sailor and
In fear of being drowned;
And then a great adventurer
Imperilled on the ground.

Then suddenly fatigue set in
--My brother *was* a brat—
So I leaned over from the top
Took aim at him and SPAT!

Double Trouble

Rusty Fischer

I wish that I could make a clone.
A real good body double!
Then he could take my place at home,
And get in all the trouble!

I'd play in paint and eat junk food
And it would be the same
As if I'd never done a thing,
'Cause HE'D take all the blame!

I'd be the best son ever found.
(As far as Dad could see.)
When really he could hardly find
A "worser" kid than ME!

For while he sat and ate dessert
I'd be a big, fat pain!
And while he slept in my warm bed
I'd lie down in—the rain?

Hey, wait a sec! Who IS this jerk?
To try and be so sly!
When all along there's no one like
Just Me, Myself and I!

The Perfect Child

Peter Austin

A meeting was arranged by Children's Aid
 To choose adoptive parents for Doreen;
 But tidings from the doctor came between,
 So laden with foreboding, it was stayed.
 Three couples, when they heard, "disfigured feet:
 She'll likely never run, and *never* dance,"
 Imparted their displeasure at a glance,
 And engineered a provident retreat;

But one remained – a man with ragged hair
 And calloused hands that never quite came clean,
 A woman dressed in pink and mustard green,
 Who shrugged and grinned, and said they didn't care....
 In oak-floored homes, by crutch marks undefiled,
 The others still await the perfect child.

Mother's Smile

Mike Burch

There never was a fonder smile
 than mother's smile, no softer touch
 than mother's touch. So sleep awhile
 and know she loves you more than "much."

So more than "much," much more than "all."
 Though tender words, these do not speak
 of love at all, nor how we fall
 and mother's there, nor how we reach
 from nightmares in the ticking night
 and she is there to hold us tight.

There never was a stronger back
 than father's back, that held our weight
 and lifted us when we were small
 and bore us till we reached the gate,
 then held our hands that first bright mile
 till we could run, and did, and flew.
 But, O, a mother's tender smile
 will leap and follow after you!

It's Her Room Now Rusty Fischer

My room is now quite empty.
It's absolutely bare.
And soon another girl will put
All *her* neat stuff in there.

She'll fill up all the bookshelves
With poetry and knickknacks.
She'll hang up all her posters
With a hundred tiny thumb-tacs.

Her bed will go where mine once was.
Her dreams will flood the ceiling.
And I'll be somewhere far away
With wallpaper...that's peeling.

I wonder what she'll look like.
I wonder who she'll be.
I wonder if my good old room
Will ever think of...me.

The Runner

Neil Harding McAlister

Your urgent, crunching footfall down the cinder running track
Grows fainter as you disappear into the setting sun.
Your painful gasps I almost feel, as twilight skies fade black,
But you will practice breathlessly 'til many laps are done.

I shield my burning eyes to watch your small, lithe silhouette
Dash silently along the course as nightfall swallows day.
The moon hangs in the sky, although the sun has not quite set,
And child, I feel afraid, because you seem so far away.

When you were only five years old I jogged right by your side
Just slow enough to let you win the race and share your fun.
Then you grew tall and strong; and soon it filled me with such pride
To watch you speed ahead and fly as I had never run!

You traded in your booties for an athlete's running shoes.
Someplace I've got new shoes I bought the day that you were born.
While you rush forward, I look back, amazed at how you grew:
A father's coming sundown is his daughter's brilliant morn.

When was the last time that you took my hand to cross the street?
Or ran to me in glee when you were playing on our lawn?
The childhood firsts come scampering on noisy, little feet;
But last times creep up quietly -- then quietly, they're gone.

Could this young, graceful runner, who will be a woman soon,
Have been the helpless baby whom I cradled in one hand?
Now, heedless of the gathering dark, beneath this autumn moon
You pound a firm, determined pace while night enfolds the land.

Someday when my skies darken, perhaps thoughtless men could say,
"He was not famous, rich or wise. What great things has he done?"
From mortal limitations we can never run away;
But when I squint with failing eyes into that setting sun,
And see you running in Life's race,
No matter who might claim first place,
I'll know that I have won.

Contributors

Linda A. Anderson was born in Annapolis, Maryland, USA. She says, "I spent most of my 53 years as a resident of that state until I moved to West Virginia with my husband in 1999. Since graduating high school, I've raised a family and had a variety of jobs, including secretary, aerobic dance instructor, and medical receptionist. I wrote my first poem in 4th Grade, and it was printed in the school's newsletter and put to music by the school's music teacher. With the exception of one poem in the 1980's, I didn't take up writing again until 2000. I've had poems published in the *Tucumcari Literary Review* and *A.G. Pilot International*. I favor humorous poems -- life needs laughter. My other hobbies include gardening, crafts, reading and photography."

David Gwilym Anthony is a British businessman and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. His second poetry collection, *Talking to Lord Newborough*, was published in the USA by *Alsop Review Press* (2004).

Peter Austin lives with his wife and three daughters in Toronto. He writes formal verse, and his favourite form is the sonnet. His poetry has appeared in magazines/anthologies in Canada (including *Queen's Quarterly*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Prairie Journal*, *Contemporary Verse 2* and *Ascent Aspirations*), the USA, the UK, Germany, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. As well as poetry, he

writes plays, and his musical adaptation of 'The Wind in the Willows' has been produced in Montreal, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Vancouver and Worcester, Mass. USA. After spending several years in the wrong jobs (including bank clerk and computer programmer), he has spent the last 20 in the right one, as a Professor of English at Seneca College. In his spare time (what there is of it), he pulls apart and rebuilds his house.

Ilene Black is the professional artist who illustrated this book. Now with her second book under her belt, Ms. Black plans to have her name within many more book spines as her future unfolds. She lives and works in a little country house, not far from the Bay of Fundy, in beautiful Nova Scotia, Canada. Her drawing partner, who spends most of her time stretched out at Ilene's feet, is a large, fat rabbit named Eddie. More of her work is can be seen at www.ileneblack.com.

Nicole Braganza lives in the United Arab Emirates. She says: "I enjoy writing – and children's poetry has always been my first love, as it allows me to play with words and experiment with form and ideas. I have been writing since age 10, and have contributed to many poetry journals and magazines, apart from writing on-line. My poem *Look to Your Dream* was selected for publication in the 2003 calendar of the National Black Child Development Institute of America."

Gord Braun lives in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada, where he writes various kinds of verse, including light, non-rhyming - and the occasional limerick. He's been published in *Folklore*, *Grain Magazine*, *Western People*, *Yorkton This Week*, as well as *Saskatchewan Celebrates* (online) and *Millennium Science Fiction & Fantasy*, also online. He has also released *Icebergs In Love*, his first self-published collection of poems, most falling into the rhyming and light-verse categories.

Cathy Bryant is 40 and lives in Manchester, UK. She has a degree in philosophy and has had a variety of jobs, from civil service clerk to artists' model. Since Cathy was a child she has written poems, stories and novels. Her work has appeared in various magazines such as *Midnight Times* and the *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine*. Although much of her work fits into the fairy tale and fantasy genres, there are many exceptions, and time spent working in childcare has led Cathy to write many children's poems and stories. As well as writing, Cathy's hobbies include ethical cardmaking, bookcrossing, veganism and cats.

Dick Buenger (Richard E. Buenger, M.D.), was born in Chicago, USA in 1922. He was Professor and Chairman of the Dept. of Diagnostic Radiology and Nuclear Medicine at Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago; and former President of the Radiological Society of North America. Dr. Buenger says, "I have always loved music and words. Since I cannot sing and do not play an instrument, I sublimated my creative urges into poetry that has rhyme and meter. I have until recently been a

closet writer with no audience except my grandchildren for the poems that I love to compose. I am a member of The Society of The Fifth Line, which meets annually to exchange limericks – my other love of word usage. Writing poetry helps me sort my thoughts, find new words to express my feelings, and lets me sing songs to myself."

Mike Burch (Michael R. Burch) is the editor of *The HyperTexts* (www.thehypertexts.com), where he has published the work of three Pulitzer Prize nominees and recent winners of the T. S. Eliot, Richard Wilbur and Howard Nemerov awards. He has three Pushcart nominations, and his poetry has been translated into Farsi, Russian and Gjuha Shqipe (Albanian) by Farideh Hassanzadeh Mostafavi, Dr. Mahnaz Badihian, Yelena Dubrovina and Majlinda Bashllari. His work has appeared over 700 times in publications which include *Shabestaneh*, *Bashgah* and *Mahmag* (Iran), *Kritya* (India), *Gostinaya* (Russia), *Sonnetto Poesia* and *The Eclectic Muse* (Canada), *Numbat* (Australia), *Ancient Heart Magazine* and *The Word* (England), *The Book of Hope and Dreams* (Scotland), *Nutty Stories* (South Africa), *Voices Israel*, and *Black Medina*, *The Chariton Review*, *Light Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *The Lyric*, *Voices for Africa*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Writer's Digest – The Year's Best Writing*, *ByLine* and *Verse* (USA).

Angela Burns, a co-editor of this book, is a writer and publisher by trade, and a journalist by profession. She lives on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada in an area so beautiful she finds it a constant inspiration. She is a community

activist whose often scathing, rhyming, commentary poetry, as well as researched articles, appear in the monthly *The Island Word* newspaper. She believes that rhyming poetry is both under-rated and under-utilized as a literary form. Her work appeared in two previous poetry anthologies by this publisher, and herself published an anthology of prose and poetry, *Verve – Writings by the Valley Women of Words* in 2006. When not staring at a computer screen, she enjoys reading (and writing) speculative fiction, creating fabric arts and trolling thrift shops for items related to these interests. She invites anyone to write her at valleyincline@yahoo.ca. We are grateful to Angela for her kind help proof-reading the manuscript of this book, and for her invaluable editorial assistance and technical advice.

Srinjay Chakravarti is a 35-year-old journalist, economist, writer and translator based in Calcutta, India. He was educated at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta and at universities in Calcutta and New Delhi. He has a B.Sc. (Economics honors) and an M.A (English). His poetry and prose have appeared in numerous publications in nearly 30 countries. These include journals of the University of Chicago, University of Arkansas at Monticello, Southwest Minnesota State University, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, University of Otago, Dunedin, Bilkent University, Ankara and University of Salzburg, Salzburg. His first book of poems, *Occam's Razor*, has received an award in Australia. His journalistic columns include essays and articles on economics, politics, physics (including astrophysics) and literature (including literary criticism and book reviews).

Gregory Christiano, a cartographer by trade, is now working in Manhattan as an Account Executive for a major corporation. He has won the coveted Bronx County Historical Society's best narrative essay in 2002, and many other awards for prose and poetry. Recently Mr. Christiano was awarded excellence in winning best poem and essay in the Joyce Indik New Jersey Reader's Theater for VSA Arts of New Jersey. He is a published author of two books, *A Night on Mystical Mountain*, (2005) and *Conversations from the Past*, (2007). His eight chapter novella *Invisible Universe* has been translated into Chinese and appears in the January '07 installment of the Science Fiction World Translations edition OMW, an immensely popular sci-fi magazine in China. His work also appears in other journals, anthologies and magazines and on the Internet. Mr. Christiano is married and living in New Jersey with his wife of 28 years and three children.

Sally Clark lives in Fredericksburg, Texas, USA with her husband of 37 years. She is a high school graduate. Sally began writing after she and her husband retired from the restaurant business in 2001. Since then, she has published poetry for children and adults, as well as humor, greeting cards, creative non-fiction, and fiction. Her poem, *Rainbow's End*, won third place for Poetry from the San Antonio Writers Guild in 2006. It was also published in the on-line children's magazine, *Stories For Children*, in February of 2008. Her children's poetry has appeared on-line at *Kidz Wonder*, in print in *Highlights of Home Schooling*, and in *Blooming Tree Press'* children's anthologies,

'Summer Shorts' and 'Sweet Dreams.'
She is 53 years old.

Sally Cook is an artist and poet living in rural New York with her husband and cats. She says: "The sonnet, narrative quatrains and rhyme assist me in expressing the world around me. I sometimes write about color in the landscape, mistakes I've made, people I've known, the habits of animals, the structure of a flower." Whether writing or painting, color is important to her. She loves music, complicated puzzles and clothes, which broadcast opinions to the world. She does not think like everyone else. Cook's poems have been featured in the *Raintown Review*, and published in such journals as *Contemporary Sonnet*, *Iambs & Trochees*, *Lucid Rhythms*, *The New Formalist*, and *Pivot*. Her poem *As The Underworld Turns* was a recent third prize winner in the Best American Poetry challenge. Her poetry may be seen at www.formalpoetry.com/ebooks/cook.html

Cynthia Deatherage, Ph.D., cut her teeth on epics, myths, and legends - whether Hercules battling the Hydra, or Beowulf trouncing Grendel, or Robin Hood thwarting the Sheriff of Nottingham, or Bilbo finding the One Ring, or Frodo destroying it - such tales have influenced her imagination, creativity, and thus, her poetry. Love of literature - especially the adventurous type - pursued Dr. Deatherage through her college career in her choice of studies (B.A and M.A in English and a Ph.D. in Old and Middle English Language and Literature). Dr. Deatherage hopes that through this volume other children will become enthralled with

literature, adventure, and poetry - including her own two youngsters.

Ann Dixon, author of this book's introductory chapter, has been writing essays, poems, and books for adults and children for more than 20 years. Her poetry for children has appeared in the magazines *Cricket* and *Ladybug* and the anthology *Once Upon Ice*. She has written eight picture books for children, including the upcoming *When Posey Peeked at Christmas* and award-winning titles *Blueberry Shoe*, *The Sleeping Lady*, and *Big-Enough Anna*. She holds a B.A. in Swedish Language and Literature from the University of Washington and a Master's degree in Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University. For the past 25 years she has lived in Willow, Alaska, U.S.A., where she works as a school librarian. In 2000 she was honored with the CLIA award for Contribution to Literacy in Alaska. When not reading or writing, she likes to garden, walk, ski, and swim. A sample of her poetry for children can be viewed at www.anndixon.com.

J. Graham Ducker: An honors graduate of Laurentian University, Mr. Ducker spent many years as a principal, kindergarten teacher and primary methods specialist, in various Ontario schools. After retiring, he published his memoirs in his book *Don't Wake The Teacher!* which received a high rating. When traveling to Cuba in 2007 with the Canada Cuba Literary Alliance, he met with the Canadian Ambassador, did poetry readings at the University of Havana, the Havana Library and the International Book Fair. Upon returning home, he had a launch for

his poetry book *Observations Of Heart And Mind*. He has had many short stories and poems published. www.grahamducker.com

Susan Eckenrode, a young-at-heart 63, lives with her husband and three cats near Loveland, Ohio, USA. She began writing poetry in 2002, preferring rhymed and metered forms, usually delivered as narratives. Until recently, she has remained content with writing and perfecting a poem a day, with little desire to pursue publication. The *Rhyme and Reason* and *Poems for Big Kids* anthologies contain her first (other than on-line) published work. Some of her many interests include gardening, interior design and painting. She is an avid nature lover and enjoys long hikes on the trails near her home. She and her husband are newly-retired and finally free to travel as the spirit moves them - to visit their daughters and grandchildren as well as extended family and friends throughout the U.S. Long hours on the road are prime times for polishing poetic inspirations from many varied sources such as: nature (including human nature), family members and pets.

Catherine Edmunds worked for a couple of decades as a classical musician before switching careers to re-invent herself as a novelist/poet and artist/illustrator. Her writing is embedded in the natural world and veers between fantasy and romance with a dash of humor, and her artwork embraces such diverse themes as delicate portraiture and exploding beetroots. Publications for 2008 include her poetry collection, *Wormwood, Earth and Honey* (Circaidy Gregory Press), and

illustrations for Daniel Abelman's novel, *Allakazzam!* (BeWrite Books). Catherine is married with three children and currently lives in northeast England, between the grey North Sea and the windswept High Pennines.

Wayne Edwards is a native Texan. He graduated from Texas A&M University in 1957. He lives on a fish farm in Texas with his wife Ruth. Wayne retired from the US Air Force in 1977. He spent his last five years in the military as the Air Force's nuclear security inspector, which might explain why he built himself an underground house. Wayne didn't start writing poetry until after he had obtained senior citizen status. He has published 12 books of rhyming poetry. He has drawn cartoons for five Texas newspapers and is in growing demand to read at schools and church gatherings. He furnishes entertainment for club functions, political fund raisers and private parties. He is a storyteller for the George Bush Presidential Library, where he reads his poetry and shows his cartoons to hundreds of school children. Wayne's poems and illustrations can be seen on his web site, www.familypoet.com.

Phillip A. Ellis is currently studying English Honors at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. His chapbook, *The Flayed Man*, is due from Gothic Press this October. He also has a poetry book due from Hippocampus Press. He lives on the eastern coast of Australia, and he particularly likes prairie voles.

Lee Evans is 57 years old and a graduate of the University of Maryland. Having retired from the Maryland

State Archives, he is now residing in Bath, Maine. He has recently published a collection of his poems, called *Maryland Weather*, which is available on Lulu.com and Amazon.com. The poems in this volume are for the most part formal, but there are many in free verse. He has written poetry for most of his adult life, but did not pursue the craft in earnest until he was in his early forties. His poetry has appeared in the *Rhyme and Reason* anthology, and in such journals as Contemporary Rhyme, The Golden Lantern, Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, and Romantics Quarterly.

Jen Finlayson was born in Toronto, Canada, and raised on Dr. Seuss, Sesame Street, jazz and show tunes. She writes, "I have a B.A with Honours in English from Carleton University in Ottawa, and in 1998 I was awarded the George Wicken Achievement Award for writing from Centennial College in Toronto. I have given several live poetry readings in Toronto, briefly published my own chapbooks through the tiny Whimsivore press, and am now performing readings and singing folk songs in Second Life. I currently live in Toronto with my husband and my cat, and more stuffed animals than can be counted easily. "

Peggy Fletcher is a poet/artist from Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. She is widely published in literary magazines, and has won many awards. She has a short story collection, a two act play, five poetry chapbooks, and six poetry books published, the most recent *From the Reserves*, (Stanza Break Press, 2008). A Visual Arts graduate from U.W.O, and member of the Writers' Union of Canada, the

Canadian League of Poets, P.E.N, and the Ontario Poetry Society, she has taught creative writing at Lambton College, and is married to John Drage, fellow writer. She has five grown daughters and many grandchildren.

Patricia Louise Gamache, at the age of 70, lives in Sidney B.C., where she enjoys the good life. The popular Port of Sidney is close to Victoria and the sea. Consequently, the residents of this retirement village have aptly called it Sidney-by-the-Sea. Before moving to Sidney and after visiting the unique little city, Patricia wrote the poem *A Home by the Sea* for her husband. They both dreamed of retiring to Sidney, but after a long illness and his untimely death, she moved to Sidney alone. Patricia enjoys family and friends, gardening, shopping, reading and writing. Two 22-month old kittens are still training her. The wily duo, consider her a slow learner.

Ryan Gibbs is an English professor at Lambton College in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, whose publication credits include the poems *Just to be You* in Delicious (Cranberry Tree Press) and *Taming the Dragon* in Unlocking the Muse (Beret Days Press).

Peter G. Gilchrist lives in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and makes a living as a lawyer and an executive recruiter. He is a parent, a paddler and a poet. His poetry has been published in Reconnaissance Magazine, Saucy Vox Review, Literati, Worm and Cowboy Poetry.com. Along with Peter Karwacki and Ken Corbett, Peter published *Paddle Tracks*, a collection of paddling poetry, in May of 2004.

Amy Hagerty was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA, and grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. She is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. Before marriage, she worked as an actuarial analyst for the Boston office of Watson Wyatt Worldwide. She now lives in Tiverton, Rhode Island with her husband James, their daughter Claire and many dogs and cats. All of them have been an inspiration to her writing. Her stories and poems for children have been accepted by such publications as: *Stories for Children*, *Fandangle*, *Word Salad*, *Whimsy*, *Cecil Child*, *New Leaders for New Schools*, Faraway Press (UK), and *Whittle Tykes*. She is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators.

Frances Hern says, "I began writing poetry sometime around the age of ten with my versions of Tennyson, Keats and Wordsworth. I didn't understand all the words in my father's books of English Romantic poetry but I loved their sounds, their rhythm and rhyme. *My Sister* began with the rhythm of Lewis Carroll's 'How doth the little crocodile' (itself a parody of 'How doth the little busy bee' by Isaac Watts). My version began with the line '*How does the little garden snail.*' I had this rhythm running through my mind when a conversation cropped up about someone who showers and showers until the hot water tank is empty. Within minutes, the poem was born. Besides poetry, I write children's fiction, and non-fiction. My book, *Arctic Explorers: In Search of the Northwest Passage*, was one of Altitude Publishing's Amazing Stories series.

Mary Rand Hess lives outside Washington, D.C., USA with her husband, two sons and a peculiar little dog. Although she originally thought she'd be a rock star, she ended up graduating from George Mason University in Virginia with a degree in English Writing. Her work has been published in community, national, and international magazines and newspapers ever since. Her first picture book, *Cyrus Becomes A Clown*, is available on www.mightybook.com and www.sillybooks.net. Currently, Mary is at work on several books for children. In addition to the written word, Mary enjoys composing music, dancing and traveling with her family to places old and new.

Elizabeth F. Hill informs us, "I am a stay-at-home mother, currently residing in Edmonton with my husband and my son. The holder of a Ph.D in intercultural education, I have been a sessional instructor at the University of Alberta and a research assistant at Charles Sturt University in Australia and for Aichi Gakusen University in Japan. At one time, I also taught secondary school in Nigeria under the auspices of CUSO. I enjoy my family, music, literature, travel, sports and creative writing."

Kimberly Hodgkinson-Spencer writes: I am an elementary school teacher, married with two children. Currently I teach 2nd Grade. I write with my students daily, and enjoy helping children bring their writing to life with fantastic words and their daily or unusual experiences. I have a B.A from the University of Florida and a Master's in reading from the University of New Hampshire. I continue to take classes on-line and at

Colorado State University in writing and reading. I am originally from New York, and also grew up in Florida. I lived in New Hampshire for 10 years, and currently reside in Northern Colorado. I have been writing poetry since I was a little girl. I enjoy writing personal poems for my family and ones that are humorous or involve nature. I haven't been previously published. I enjoy writing, reading, biking and baking. I also dabble in gardening and daydreaming. I wrote *Ode to Mystery Meals* for one of my daughters who doesn't always enjoy the meals served at our dinner table.

Janis Butler Holm has served as Associate Editor for *Wide Angle*, the film journal. Her essays, stories, poems, and performance pieces have appeared in small-press, national, and international magazines. *Sven's Pen* is her first poem for young people.

June C. Horsman says, "I was born in a small community called Ripples in New Brunswick, Canada; and I currently live in Moncton, NB. Writing is my favorite hobby, as it requires only pen, paper and imagination. I enjoy writing songs, poems and short stories. I have had some work published. I am a member of the New Brunswick Writers Federation. Besides day-dreaming, I enjoy my grandchildren's visits."

Juleigh Howard - Hobson has recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and, as well, has been nominated for inclusion in the Best of The Net 2007 Anthology (Sundress Press). Her work has appeared in many places, including: The Barefoot Muse, Contemporary Rhyme, Aesthetica Magazine, The Runestone

Journal, Every Day Fiction, Her Circle, The Australian Reader, Idunna, Going Down Swinging, Whistling Shade, Mobius, and The Hypertexts. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her artist-blacksmith husband, three homeschooled children and two cats -- neither of which is particularly count-ulous...!

Bryon D. Howell is a poet currently residing in the state of Connecticut, USA. He has been writing poetry for over 20 years. Although Mr. Howell never did major in literature or in poetry when he attended college, poems of his have been published in over 300 online and in-print magazines all over the world. Most of the poetry Bryon writes is in the sonnet form. He also writes and submits under an array of pen-names. In late 2008, Bryon will be re-locating to the Philippines.

jgdittier (pen name of Ron Jones) now 75, is retired in Connecticut, USA after serving small industry in meeting their environmental-related requirements. His pencil name, jgdittier, results from his writing light verse (ditties) and his response to having read J. G. Whittier's 'Barbara Frietchie.' He is smilingly committed to a quest to promote the poetry and poets of yore, as he is a strong advocate of R&M verse. In that effort he has written hundreds of paraphrased poems of yore, challenging his internet readers to "ID and link to the mystery poem." Such verse duplicates the cadence, rhyme scheme and message - and, he says, hopefully promotes both an interest in our poetic heritage and respect for the bards of yore. To find much his verse on the internet, google "jgdittier".

Feel free to email him at rbjones02@optonline.net.

Sonja Kershaw says, "I was born in Germany two years before World War II, and emigrated to the United States at age 19. I met my husband Fred in Miami, Florida. For over 30 years I trained and bred horses, and taught jumping and dressage. After our children left for college I solved the empty nest syndrome by attending Southern Illinois University, where I earned a degree in Journalism and English. When I lost most of my sight at age 50, writing became therapy and purpose of life. Besides poetry, I write essays, memoirs and stories about the many animals in my life. Since my husband's death in 2004, I have lived alone in rural Illinois with my horses, cats, dogs and a three-legged goat."

Graeme King was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1950. He started writing rhyming poetry when he was about 10 years old, and he remembers having an exercise book full of poems when he was 11. He attended Ivanhoe Grammar School on full scholarship, awarded mainly because of this writing book at primary school. Over the years he wrote only sporadically, but always seemed to write something at least once a year. Almost everything posted on his website, www.kingpoetry.com, has been written since January 2005. He enjoys music, gardening and fishing in the nearby lakes. While he appreciates all other writers, it is special poems that particularly inspire him, and he reads many contemporary magazines to try to gain inspiration from the efforts of others. He says that he enjoys the freedom of free verse, but there is

nothing like putting together a clever rhyme in correct meter that is ha-ha funny as well.

Geoffrey Landis is a scientist and a well-known writer. He informs us, "As a scientist, I work on the Mars Exploration Rovers at NASA; as a writer, I am the author of many science fiction stories and one novel, *Mars Crossing*, as well as numerous poems. I've won the Hugo and Nebula awards for science fiction writing, and the Rhysling award for science fiction poetry. I've been writing occasional poetry since I was in high school, but didn't actually publish my first poem until many years later. My poetry spans the range from doggerel, to song lyrics, to free verse. I live in Berea, Ohio, USA, along with my wife (also a writer), our two cats, Lurker and Sam, and a yard full of trees. More can be found on my web page, www.sff.net/people/geoffrey.landis."

Simon Leigh is a former university professor, writing full-time in Toronto. "From Melbourne, Australia, I was educated way beyond my intelligence at Sydney University, Oxford and the University of New Brunswick. Thirteen years at universities ended in a construction job digging drains, then 13 years as a racing driver ended in a concrete wall at Mosport. I now ski race. My poems and stories have appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, the *Antigonish Review*, etc. and four anthologies. My three poetry books are *The Bleeding Clock* (New Brunswick: Fiddlehead Poetry Books), *Dying Flowers* (Fiddlehead Poetry Books) and *Short Strokes* (Toronto: Shift F7 Press, 2007.) Available through Amazon, or email me at simonhowardleigh@yahoo.ca. My novel *Wild Women: a memoir with six lies* was published by UKA Press, 2005

and in a new edition in 2007. My two new novels, *The Killing*, and *Death in Venice II* are with an agent; and a play, *Stalker*, is in production."

Norma West Linder was born in Toronto, Canada, and spent her formative years on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. She is a member of The Writers Union of Canada, PEN, The Ontario Poetry Society, Writers in Transition, and is past president of the Sarnia Branch of The Canadian Authors' Association. Linder is the author of five novels, nine collections of poetry, a memoir of Manitoulin Island, a children's book, and co-author of a biography of Pauline McGibbon. For 25 years she taught English and Creative Writing at Lambton College in Sarnia. She has two daughters and a son.

Irene Livingston won Canada's prestigious Leacock Prize for Poetry in 2001. She began writing for adults in 1998, after starting children's writing a couple years earlier. She has been published in Canada, USA, England, Australia and New Zealand. Recently she won 2nd prize in Arc Magazine's Poem of the Year contest, and she placed 3rd for Prairie Fire's Bliss Carmen Award. Irene has written a novel, a series of connected short stories with Damon Runyon-like characters, called *Down Around the Corners*, and a poetry collection. She has created two picture books, *Finkelhopper Frog*, and its sequel, *Finkelhopper Frog Cheers* (Tricycle Press, Berkeley CA, USA).

James Kassam McAlister, 15 years old, is the youngest author whose poetry appears in this collection. He started writing poems at the instigation of his Grade 6 teacher.

Now in high school, James enjoys mathematics and sciences the most. *The Weather Report* was written as a novel approach to an assignment for his Grade 10 science class.

Neil Harding McAlister, M.D., Ph.D. (father of James and Zara) lives in Port Perry, Ontario, Canada. He specializes in Internal Medicine. He is co-author of five science books; co-editor and publisher of this anthology and its predecessors, *New Classic Poems* and *Rhyme and Reason*. Dr. McAlister's scientific articles, non-fiction and humor appear in professional and commercial journals. Besides writing, collecting and publishing poetry, his other hobbies include backyard astronomy and composing music. He maintains two Internet sites: *Traveler's Tales*, for poetry, and *Brigadoonery*, for fans of Scottish-Canadian humor.

Zara McAlister, a co-editor of this book, is currently an English major at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. She enjoys reading, creative writing, travel and fashion.

Tony Newman was born in Rugby, Warwickshire in 1942. He attended Tower Lodge preparatory school and the Harris School in Rugby, and Rugby College of Technology and Arts. Most of his working years were spent as a draftsman-designer in the aerospace industries of Britain and Canada. He has been a long-standing member of the Royal Observer Corps. He settled in Ontario, Canada in 1981. His interests include genealogy, writing, natural history, ancient history, pre-history, aircraft of WWII, British steam railways, history embedded in legend, poetry, anomalous phenomena, music, book-collecting,

and slipshod, vindictive and obstructionist judicial processes. He has published three books: *Not Since I Grew Legs*, a poetry anthology (2004); *It's A Known Fact* a florilegium (poetry & prose)(2006); and *Great Central, The Twilight Years – A Photographic Essay 1960-1964* (2007). The author's poems are found in several British poetry anthologies.

B. L. Richardson, author of the story poem, *The Great Bug Race* (HMS Press, 2006), is glad to have set down roots in London, Ontario, Canada, where she has launched her three children into adulthood. It was while moving around the country that Bonnie began storytelling to her own family. Over the last 15 years she has taken several creative writing courses and tried her hand at writing for newspapers and local travel magazines. Bonnie now writes solely for children in prose and poetry. To view her website, google: bonnie richardson and click on CANSCAIP member

Sally Ann Roberts has been writing poetry for over 30 years. At the age of nine, she started keeping a journal where she wrote down all her thoughts and dreams. It was Dr. Suess's 'The Cat in the Hat' which inspired her into rhyming words. His nonsensical way of writing was intriguing and delightful. Then in junior high school another inspiration came when she read 'The Bells' by Edgar Allan Poe. The differences in his poetry added to her vocabulary and provided ideas she needed to fulfill her desire to become a poet. Sally says there are so many influences for her, it is difficult to pinpoint any one thing. Every day is an inspiration of one kind or another. When she sits

down to write yet another poem, she finds herself fulfilling another dream.

Rolli, the recipient of the 2007 John Kenneth Galbraith Literary Award, is the author of more than 800 poems and stories for children and adults. Those interested in sponsoring/soliciting one or more of these may contact him at rolliwrites@hotmail.com

Madelyn Rosenberg is a freelance writer living in Arlington, Virginia, USA. Her poetry has appeared in 2River View and Literary Mama.

Evelyn Roxburgh writes, "I did not have much formal education because of health problems when I was young. I worked for an airline for many years, and retired at 58 to attend a Masters degree course in writing for children. Having attained my degree, I contributed articles to magazines and won first prize for an adult poem, and 2nd prize for a travelogue in an international competition. I have had poetry published in anthologies, and having taken up painting, won a prize in an art competition in Auvillar, France. After retirement, I bought a derelict cottage in France and restored it, met and married my husband Peter in Barbados, and now live in a lovely house that we had built in the South of France. I hope to continue my writing career for both children and adults. Presently I am pursuing a diploma in art with The London Art College. "

Joseph S. Salemi, Ph.D. teaches in the Department of Classical Languages at Hunter College, City University of New York. He is a Lane Cooper Fellow, an NEH scholar, and a winner of the Classical and Modern

Literature Award, as well as a four-time finalist for the Howard Nemerov Prize. He has published four books of poetry: *Formal Complaints* and *Nonsense Couplets* (Somers Rocks Press); *Masquerade* (Pivot Press); and *The Lilacs On Good Friday* (New Formalist Press). He is a regular essayist and reviewer for the Expansive Poetry On-Line website, a former editor of *Iambs & Trochees* (editor), and the editor of a new formal poetry magazine that will appear in the spring of 2008. His work has appeared in over 100 journals and 10 anthologies.

She is the pen name of Shelia Rackley, who writes, "I was born in England in the 1930s. I grew up during the Second World War, with air raids and rationing. In my 20s I emigrated to Australia on a government scheme, and lived there for two years. After returning to England I couldn't settle, so I came to Canada in 1963. After living in Toronto and Montreal for about a year, I went to Vancouver, where I worked at various jobs. After retiring I settled in Victoria on Vancouver Island. I started writing nonsense poems a few years ago. I enjoy long walks with a golden cocker spaniel known as George III because of his mad moments. I read a lot, and love crosswords. Retirement is the best holiday I have ever had."

Myra Smith Stilborn, our most senior poet, is a 91-year old writer currently living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and was raised on a farm near Indian Head. She writes, "I have a B.A. from the University of Saskatchewan and was a teacher for 10 years in prairie one-room schoolhouses and in town high schools. My occupations have

included homemaker and teacher, and I have been writing poetry since the age of 10 (inspired by The Torchbearers' Magazine, that was included in the Regina Leader, which accepted children's work). I was a First Place winner in the Salmon Arm Sonnet Contest of British Columbia and have had haiku published in Japan as well as other writing in the Canadian Children's Annual, Western People Magazine, and Folklore. My preference is to write rhymed poetry, and I often utilize nature themes. My hobbies have included fencing, tatting and identifying wildflowers. Some of my self-published writing is available on www.lulu.com.

Julie Thorndyke, an Australian writer, has a day job in a library but would rather be walking on the beach collecting poems! Her work has been published in journals including Phoenix, Eucalypt, Studio, Yellow Moon, Bottle Rockets, Ribbons, Paperwasp, and Stylus. Her first children's story was published by Ginninderra Press in 2006.

Ian Thornley says that he escaped from the shadowlands of England in his early 20's, not so very long ago. He lives in Boston with his wife, three children and two cats. When he is not writing, or striving with variable success as a husband and father, he is a pediatrician. His poetry has appeared most recently in The Eclectic Muse.

Joanne Underwood is a Canadian poet living in Calgary. She's married and the mother of two grown sons whose antics in the growing-up years were fodder for some of her poems. In 2007, she won first prize for poetry at the Powell River Festival of Writers,

had a haiku published in Geist magazine and a poem included in the Alberta poets' anthology, *Writing the Land*. She enjoys playing with rhythm and rhyme and the challenge of writing to a set topic.

Peter Webb writes software to empower scientists and poetry and stories to amuse his two children. He has published articles in trade journals, but none of his imaginative work has appeared in print before. His poetry mostly scans and almost always rhymes, though he occasionally falls prey to the seductive brevity of a haiku. He admires the formalism of Stevenson, the constructive madness of Blake and Coleridge and the simplicity of Robert Frost. His poems idealize the natural world, and long for a life without compromise or dilution. Peter has degrees in computer science, English and business. He lives with his wife and children in Newton, Mass., USA.

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