

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

BY LONDON STUDENTS & EDUCATORS

A GOLD SCHOOLS ANTHOLOGY



This marvellous anthology is a collection of pieces written by teachers, creative writers and pupils. They all come from diverse backgrounds. Most of the pupils are from a varied range of London state schools. Having been given the theme of 'Dreams and Nightmares' by Goldsmiths' Department of Educational Studies, these pupils wrote some wonderful responses. The teachers and writers have written about this topic too, and also provided some brilliant personal language histories, poems, stories and essays of their own.

The anthology is required reading for anyone who wants to learn about young people's lives and contemporary society, and is also a wonderful resource for teachers and creative writers in search of inspiration.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

The Gold Schools Anthology 2020
Funded by Goldsmiths' Widening Participation
Department and the Department of Educational Studies

by
London Students, Writers & Teachers

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Dedication

For all London students who want to be, or already are, creative writers.

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Introduction

This marvellous new anthology is a collection of pieces written by pupils and teachers who have learnt and taught respectively a varied range of London state schools. Having been given the theme of 'Dreams and Nightmares' by the Department of Educational Studies, these pupils and teachers wrote movingly about their lives, dreams and nightmares in the form of poems, fictional extracts and autobiographical accounts. They were assisted by their teachers as well as creative writing post-graduate students & PGCE English students at Goldsmiths. It also includes a number of 'personal language histories' as well. It is divided into two parts: a pupil section and a 'teachers-as-writers' section.

The book is not only required reading for anyone who wants to learn about young people's lives, but it's also a wonderful resource for teachers who wish to inspire their pupils to write in a similar vein.

You can watch the video that kicked off the first anthology here:

https://youtu.be/WU7z4Qv_FiA

And find out more about the various activities going on the MA in Creative Writing and Education & PGCE English programme which hosts the anthology at these links:

Official Goldsmiths' websites:

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/pgce/secondary-english/>

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/ma-creative-writing-education/>

Unofficial blogs:

<https://www.facebook.com/pgceenglishgoldsmiths>

<https://www.facebook.com/creativewritingandeducation/>

The anthology is published through Print on Demand which means if there are any mistakes or omissions, they can be quickly rectified. Please email me if you spot anything: **f.gilbert@gold.ac.uk** Francis Gilbert, November 2020

Beal High School

Year 7

Dreams and Nightmares by Jamie Ramasamy

Chapter One

The Dreams

It has been five days since the summer holidays started and strange things happened during those nights. I was stuck inside a dream. It was very hard to get used to but it was very fun. Sadly I only had eight hours inside the dream before I had to wake up.

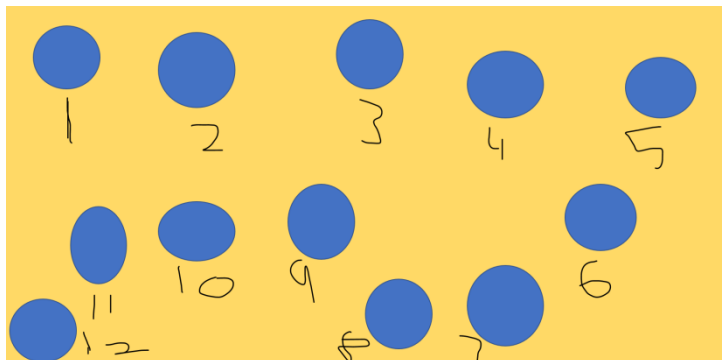
Jack had a very miserable life. He had always hidden in the shadows during school and always got in trouble but during the holidays, he enjoyed himself. Although he did not understand why he was stuck inside a dream, he did not really worry or think about the consequences. Since night six, he started realising that parts of his dream began to fade away. He decided to ignore this but things just got worse and the dream he was living for a long time became a nightmare.

Chapter Two

The Nightmare

You have two and a half hours to make it out of this place. If you get any scars or injuries, you will have them in the real world. The map inside the book is the set of directions you will need take to remove your curse. Your goal is to reach the end without dying once. Also, you lose your ability to speak for most of your adventure. Good luck.

It was night 27 when Jack could only see dead bushes, rocky hills and lava pools. There was also a book which had a map inside.



From what it said, Jack only had two hours to escape. He was frustrated that he did not know what to do. In anger, he threw the note in the lava. That is when he saw some parkour leading to another island. Luckily, Jack had a lot of experience with parkour by jumping from building to building. But the buildings he parkoured on were very low and he tended to fail a lot. He could not risk it, so he looked at the frame in which the platforms were being held on. That was his chance, as the frames were all linked so he could use them as a tightrope. The only problem was how he was going to get up to the frames. He saw a rope on the floor and decided to use it to climb up. He threw the rope over the pole and tied one side onto the island. He then started to climb up and made it. He then stood still, stunned at what was ahead of him.

Chapter 3

Hypnotized

"Hello," a man said. "Could you give me a favour?"

Jack nodded his head. The man then gave him a book with a note.

"Your objective is to put those sheep inside that pen. Make sure there are 13 inside."

The sheep were already in the pen, so he did not understand what he had to do. He started to count the sheep but the sheep started jumping over the fence and re-entering. This kept on happening until he began to fall asleep. This would make him fail the challenge. Luckily, he had some wool from some sheep so when he was about to sleep, he tickled his nose making him sneeze. When he woke up, he saw all 13 sheep inside the pen, all asleep. The man then made a bridge rise from the lava below. It took around five minutes to get across, but he made it in the end.

Chapter 4

The Lava Proof Boat

The next island was a docking area for boats. Jack did not know why there were boats as they would all burn, but as he got closer to the main docking area, the more he realised why. A lava proof boat. It seemed to lead to the next island, but in order to go on it, he had to win a race against 15 other men. Jack was very fast, the fastest in his local area. Because of this, he had a chance. When he entered the race, he waited for half an hour for the other contestants to come. When they came, the race started. It was not hard since the other contestants were extremely slow. There was one man who was roughly the same speed as Jack. They ran through the first part of the race which was a flat path with rocks making them trip. The next obstacle was a hilly area when Jack realised the other man was ahead of him. The last part was a massive treadmill and they had to run across while it pushed them back. Jack managed to catch up and the he won. That is where he saw the ticket. During the trip, he asked the boat's captain if he could skip island four and go to island 12, but he said no due to monsters. He then began to look at the map when it felt different. He shook the map and a knife and lots of gold came out. He decided to bribe the sailor with the gold and kept the knife as a weapon to fight of the monsters. The captain accepted his bribe and they agreed on going as far as island nine. They went to island nine only to find that there was only one cat. The captain began screaming for help. He then said it was the scariest monster in the world. When they got past the cat, a giant, red kraken came out of the lava and the man knocked it out with one punch, still scared of the cat. When they finally reach the island, Jack realised he could not see anything.

Chapter 5

The Mist

He then realised he was in a large amount of fog and that handcuffs were randomly on his hands and feet; it was very hard to move. He then realised he was able to speak again.

"If I'm correct, I need to go around 70 degrees west."

The further he went, the thicker the fog meant he could not breathe. He then realised he was going up a mountain. He then ran to the farthest of his abilities only to realise he was tired from the race. He then found a plank of wood lying on the floor, so he used it like a snowboard. He started to go really fast down the mountain until he saw lava. He began to scrape his knee to stop himself. It worked but the damage he took would appear in the real world. He then found the bridge to the next island.

Chapter 6

3000 token Jetpack

"Well that was tough," Jack said as his voice began to fade away.

He then saw a jetpack which they said would automatically bring you to island 11. Jack wanted to buy it, but it cost 3000 red tokens (which is the currency in the world). Jack had none so he had no hope. He began to walk away when he saw a job which gave 10 red tokens per minute. He also saw an archery competition for 2500 red tokens. He ignored the job and went to the competition. He took three shots and won 12 points while the others won three. He still needed 500 so he went to a local casino and lost 500. He then had no choice but to rob people. One man that he met earlier looked wealthy, so he decided to rob him. It was successful for a few minutes until when he got to the shop, he realised he was being followed. He bought the jetpack and flew away to island 11. He did not have enough fuel to make it to island 11 so he stopped at island 10 to get fuel but it was completely isolated.

Chapter 7

The Old Man's Shack

As he explored the area, he came upon a shack. He entered to find out that an old man was inside. He was holding a can of fuel. Jack tried taking the fuel but the man said he would only give it to him for two hell stone crystals. Sadly, Jack did not know what it was, so he asked the man. He said it was a black and red stone which was impossible to break. He went on an adventure and found a temple. A tablet on the statue said he had to find the crimson katana and stab it into a human and place it on the golden sword holder. He searched for the crimson katana only to realise that it was on island 9. He went back in the shack and while the old man was not watching, he took the fuel, filled up his jetpack and went to island 9. He stole the katana and fuel and set off. When he got back to the temple, he realised he did not need to go inside as he had more fuel and he took the katana with him to the final island for protection.

Chapter 8

The End of It All

He only had 10 minutes left to finish the final island. Little did he know he needed to find a certain dagger, stab himself and he would come back. Little did he know it was the crimson katana. The katana slipped out of his hand and a dagger was revealed. He stabbed his leg with the dagger, and he woke up in the real world. He could not move or see anything. He heard noises banging in front of him.

"Help!" he yelled as he saw sunlight.

Chapter 9

Announced Dead For 10 minutes

"He's alive!" a voice exclaimed as the door in front of him was opened. he looked around and figured out he was underground. It felt like he just rose

from the dead when he rose from a dream. Everyone from the neighbourhood were there in suits and dresses. They helped him up to the surface as Jack told them the story. Although they did not believe him, all he cared about was being alive. Ever since then, he stopped having those dreams. Jack was also in the local news and lived happily ever after.

Dreams by Rayan Khetani

Dreams are some of the most precious possessions you could ever own. So let me ask you, do you have any dreams? A couple of days ago, my mum asked me if I had any dreams. At first I said that I dreamt I was with Mo Salah in Liverpool's Stadium, munching on masala chips, on the meticulously trimmed lawn (2 meter social distancing of course)! Then she asked me again if I had any dreams for the future. At that point I realised that dreams weren't only a series of thoughts, images or sensations in a person's mind – according to Google, it can also be an experience, ambition or idea. In my opinion, if you don't have dreams you have lost your appetite for life. Therefore, dreams matter and you should be part of the growing 8% of the world's population who actually pursue them.

Martin Luther King had a dream 'that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low'. My dream isn't exactly like his, as my dream has an effect on only myself, whereas Martin Luther King's dream had an effect on every single black person in America.

I have a dream that one day I shall become an architect and will design my abode, which will proudly perch in the Monkams estate in Woodford. I have a dream that I will create a modern kitchen with an island. I have a dream that I will create an ingenious spiral staircase, which will transport me from my ground floor to the first floor and then up to the loft room. I have a dream that I will create a spacious kitchen diner by opening up my downstairs to allow sunlight to penetrate through my bi-folding doors.

My dreams are inspired from television programmes. 'Master Chef' is a great example of how you are never too old to follow dreams, as when the contestants first enter, they are from various professional backgrounds (e.g. dentists, lawyers and teachers). However when the finalists and winner of 'Master Chef' leave, they start their own chain of restaurants or become food critics, despite the challenges and difficulties they experienced along the way. A new TV show called 'Your Home Made Perfect' truly inspired me as the two architects create some mind-blowing and innovative plans to the original houses, which provided me with not only knowledge but grew my creativity.

Frankenstein also inspired me, even though he had a morbid fascination with the secrets of life and death, as he endlessly worked on his invention to pursue his dreams, no matter how much the public were against his notion.

Dreams are extremely important as they can potentially create a new purpose in life. Dreams help you to set goals for the future; the more ambitious your goals are the more hard work you must put in. It's just like training for the London marathon. Can dreams come true overnight? Of course not. Think about how long it would take an average person to train for a 26-mile run. Do you think they would give up the night before? No, even if they must limp in agony with their feet dragging behind them against the coarse pavement, they will cross over the finish line.

If you follow your dreams you will have guaranteed jubilation. Moreover, you will feel proud of yourself. A survey by Google showed that 80% of celebrities fulfilled their dreams and then went on to earn millions of pounds, live in great mansions in California and walk on the red carpet.

Overall, I hope I have persuaded children and adults to create dreams and ambitions in life, but more importantly, accomplish these goals. Walt Disney once stated that all dreams come true if you have the courage to pursue them. So start dreaming big...

The Ineffable by Rahel Abebe

You wake in the night
Cold, damp, shaking from fright
The edges of your sheets weighted
Heavy with sweat as you lie, breath bated

Darkness suffocates you in the quiet of its cocoon
So deep, so black, impenetrable even by the moon
You tear at the edges of the madness in your mind
Remnants from a midnight visitor whose form cannot be defined

Your pulse pounds in your ears as you struggle to break free
Trapped deep within a fear so palpable, one only you can see
Tight tendrils tumid with dread root you to the spot
Spectres and visions of foreboding invade your every thought

Slowly, the vice around your lungs loosens its grip

Though you still feel apprehension that you might slip
Back into the arms of that faceless reaper lurking nearby
Desperately you wish for morning, refusing to close your eyes

Year 9

Lucid Dreams by Diya Patel

Lucid dreams. Where you are in complete control. The only time you are in control, really. When life seems out of grasp, you turn to dreams, for they are yours. And you are theirs. Sometimes I wish I didn't have this 'power'. It's too much freedom. But sometimes... it's nice to escape into your own 'world'.

I came home from college. It was a long day. Science test. Science. Ugh. All about physics. It's probably the hardest subject I've ever come across. A mix between maths and science, really? I threw my burden of a bag next to my desk and flopped onto my bed. Face flat. I suddenly drifted into a deep sleep, as I rejoined my 'world' of dreams.

A navy blue filled my eyes, blended with some strong, storm-like clouds. I was floating in the air, like usual, but something was different. It felt tense. It was tense. Howling winds echoed, through this strange place, a waft of smoke. This place...it was familiar... it evoked my mind and the scene changed completely. A calm, soothing place. It was like a haven. Cirrus clouds were spread across the soft, light sky, like never-ending protection. I had never seen this scene before; no one had. It was too fantastical, surreal even. It seemed too good to be true, and my 'lucid powers' were not working. For the first time, I was not in control. What was happening?

One of the best things about this place is that clouds could communicate, animals could understand and sometimes speak back. Usually everything cooperated together, like a sanctuary. However, no animals had appeared. There wasn't even any land! Just me, floating in this weird place. Just at that second, the clouds started to shuffle around; they moved together and formed something. Words. I waited a few moments as they adjusted themselves. This was normal.

"WAKE UP"

Now I was freaked out. Weird skies, no power and creepy messages?

Usually I follow a protocol to wake up, something I developed whilst growing up; sit down, cross-legged, close your eyes and calm yourself like the half-lotus zen position. So I did exactly that. But I stayed. Why didn't it work? I

shuffled around and tried again. Maybe I wasn't calm enough. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Nothing happened. From the corner of my eye I spotted a creature of some sort. I've tried many times but I'm not experienced enough to make mythical or extinct creatures; unicorns, dinosaurs or dragons for example. But I was sure that I saw a flying Griffin, heading straight for my face. It's hostile, eagle eyes stared straight into my soul. Its majestic and firm feathers swayed against the wind's current. Its bronze, tawny and slender tail shot upwards in impulse.

My heart rate had shot out of the roof. How can I escape from this creature? There were some more tricks I've learnt whilst dreaming here. Sadly, I know I can't fly, read minds or have any 'powers', but I have learnt how to air-swim (flying). It's simple- just swim, but in the air. So I did exactly that. But it was like moving in space. You can't move by trying to swim in space (as I've learnt in physics). So that didn't work either, great. Since I couldn't do anything, I braced for impact. It readied its poise to attack. Its fierce, acicular claws sprang forward as it came to slash me. This was it. This was my end. Its claws lashed out and dug into my frail abdomen. I could feel the blood leak into my shirt. I yelled in pain, but it was no use, no one could hear me. Electric, thorn-like surges ran through my nerves and struck my spine, with a lethal ache. Where was my adrenaline? A pounding sting engulfed my body and I couldn't concentrate. I couldn't hear. And soon my sight became a blinding white. I wasn't in control.

"How does it feel...to be powerless...to have no control...to have nothing?" an unfamiliar voice hissed.

A groan escaped my lips, my stomach throbbed from the scar. It seemed as though someone had stitched me up, thank god. But another question was on my mind. Where was I?

"You think you can rule this..? You stole my world. You stole everything from me...your little 'dreams' are my world! And...you just took it..." he scorned.

I felt it in his voice. I was blindfolded, tied to a chair, but I could speak.

"W-who are you?" I asked, weakly.

"Who am I?!" He laughed in disbelief, "You know me very well, Maeve Hudson. Shall I kick start your memories?"

He poked me lightly on my temple. I didn't know this guy, I've never heard this voice and I don't know what he looks like. What was he talking about?

"I don't know you... What do you want from me, anyways?" I retorted.

"Oh...you know, the usual...MY OWN GODDAMN PLACE." He sounded like a maniac with his mood swings and anger issues. The whole package.

"What on earth are you talking about?" I was genuinely confused.

"Oh I forgot, we're aren't on your sweet 'earth' anymore..." he said.

“Umm... What?”

“That’s right, we are actually in Anabia, my world.” His voice was honeyed, but with jealousy and pain hidden inside. When did I take his world?

It seemed like hours until I felt this vehicle come to a stop, it was a surprisingly smooth ride. I was expecting bumps and brakes, since we were on another planet.

“Right, out. Now.” He held my shoulder and guided me out the car or spaceship, whatever we were on. I still couldn’t see, so I tried my best to walk without tripping over anything and everything. “Boss, maybe we should let her see...” a voice spoke gravelly. I didn’t recognise this voice, either.

“Hmm...maybe...” A few seconds later, he added, “Yeah, actually take it off.” I heard him snap his fingers as a gesture to remove the blindfold quickly.

It was bright. Really bright. It took a few minutes for my eyes to adjust, but once I saw, I knew exactly where I was. I never woke up. I was dreaming this whole time. This is where I ‘spawn’ when I go to sleep. Buildings towered over the smooth, tar roads, my city. The other naïve dreamers wandered around, they never remember this. I used to engage with them, but it was like talking to zombies. They didn’t even realise I was talking. Being practical, I immediately started searching for the creepy guy who knew me. He was behind me, looking at something.

His face full of wonder and disgust at the same time. I decided to not agitate him as he looked powerful. Deep, green eyes were sunken into his warm, tanned face. His chestnut, wispy hair was voluminous and untamed. He seemed casual, as he was loose and laid back, but his style said different. Black suit. Sharp and well-fitted. Black, polished shoes. Black belt. Was I supposed to be dressed today?

“What are you looking at?” His voice changed somehow, it was politely rude. Better than shouting and screaming, I guess.

“Uh....nothing.”

“Since you are a lucid dreamer too, I have some news to tell you, you’re trapped here, with the rest of us.” He gestured to the pavement in front of us - his accomplice, who was on the pavement, moved backwards to make some space.

Four people appeared- two girls and two boys. Their faces seemed familiar- where have I seen them?

“Who are you guys?” I asked. I wasn't the only one confused, as they didn't know each other either. All of a sudden, the four erupted into question; words spilled out of their mouths, and chaos leaked into the atmosphere. Soon

enough, things started to get heated. But the creepy guy was here to save the day.

“ALRIGHT STOP,” His bellowing voice rang in my ears, it was like he was howling.

I looked around for the assistant, maybe he was used to all his shouting – but he disappeared as soon as the four arrived. Once he caught everyone’s attention he began to speak normally. He seemed like a completely different person from when I first met him.

“Look, we’re all lucid dreamers, we’re stuck here. I don’t know how, so don’t ask. Alright, let’s all introduce ourselves. I’m Tristan Reeve. I’m 22.”

“I’m Abbie Nightingale, I’m 19,” a ginger girl with freckles spoke. She seemed sweet, but was definitely cold with first impressions.

“I’m Nate Cain, 20,” a dark skinned boy with glasses said. He seemed smart, but unpredictable.

“My name is Mateo Cohen. I am 18.” This voice was gentle but monotonous. He was fair and had black hair, I couldn’t derive much from him, as his face was stoic.

“And I’m Natalie! Natalie Rojas, 18.” She was thrilled and excited - pretty much the opposite of everyone else. Her ocean blue eyes were perfect with her blond locks- she was the living, real version of Goldilocks.

They looked at me. I didn’t want to speak, they looked intimidating, but I had to.

“Uh...I’m Maeve Hudson, 18.. Can someone tell me what’s really going on?”

A collective mutter of ‘I don’t know’ and exasperated sighs responded to me.

“Look, I already told you, we’re all lucid dreamers, and we’re stuck here,” Tristan responded. “What don’t you understand about that?”

He became angry, a little more like when I first saw him, but he managed to calm himself. I saw a glint of red in his eyes as he calmed down, that was ominous.

“Hey, you all look kind of familiar, have I seen you guys before?” Nate asked curiously. For some reason, Tristan seemed nervous just at that second. “Uh... I’m not sure about that actually, to me you guys seem familiar too.”

His eyes now turned into a pale grey but quickly melted into his original green again. Did anyone else see that? I looked towards the others; they all seemed neutral. They didn’t notice anything, but Mateo looked confused and alarmed. Maybe he saw.

It felt like weeks had passed. We were in central park. We bought some food from some fast food restaurants (since none of us have our teleporting powers) and just munched.

"So," Natalie sputtered with her mouth full, "what have you guys figured out in your time here? Like what powers have you guys figured out so far?"

"Oh, I know how to summon all the animals, assez cool pour être honnête." Nate replied, smiling smugly.

"Ugh, Nate, you know, we don't understand French." Natalie said.

"Summoning? Really?" Abbie laughed at him. "That's lame, I could teleport myself, instead of objects and stuff." she shot her head up proudly,

"Pfft, you think that's cool? Three words. I can fly." Mateo said after eating his last chip, "E so parlare italiano!"

"Wait, you can fly? I was trying so hard! I thought it was impossible!" I said, sceptically.

"Ah, I would show you, ragazza stupida, but we have lost our powers!" he exclaimed.

"Hey! I know what that meant!" I huffed. Mateo and Abbie laughed at me, but Natalie and Nate just guzzled down their burgers.

"Where's Tristan? He's taken so long to get back from the bathroom," Mateo questioned,

"Yeah, where is he?" Abbie added.

"Never fear, Tristan is here!" He sat on the bench next to Nate.

"Eww Tristan, that was not a good joke." Abbie is way too judgmental, sometimes. Tristan screwed his face up and continued to bark with laughter.

"Why did you take so long anyways?" Nate asked.

"I was trying to find a bin for my food wrapping. Huge city. No bins." He rolled his eyes and sighed. Mateo started chuckling again, "Bro, there's a bin right there!"

He pointed opposite us and revealed a tiny green bin next to a tree.

"Are you kidding me?" Tristan said in incredulity. "I must've wandered for like 50 miles to find a bloody bin!" Everyone sniggered, but I ate my pizza slice.

"Maeve, are you done yet? We've been sitting for an hour now!" Natalie said tiredly.

"Yep! Last bite!" I said just as I ate the last bit of cheesy crust.

"Finally, about time, Maeve!" Mateo exclaimed.

A few minutes later, we were on the street walking back home. "Alright, what are we having for dinner?" Natalie asked.

"Dinner?! We just had lunch and it's 1 o' clock!" I answered.

Natalie walked ahead of us and turned around, so she was walking backwards. "Just asking!" she raised her hands as if she was surrendering and smiled.

That was the last thing we saw of her. The last thing she said.

The building right by us collapsed and crashed down on Natalie. Her shriek before she got crushed rang in my ears. Nate was unresponsive as he froze in terror. Mateo was the first to scramble to the ground next to where Natalie would've been. Abbie swore and panicked as she joined Mateo on the floor.

Tristan stood by me, in awe. Not exactly like Nate, but just as shaken. As I looked at him, his eyes caught my attention. Red. Crimson red. No. This was not happening. But it became redder. Blood pooled over the smooth ground. Mateo tried to scurry away, but his hands were soaked in blood before he knew it. Tristan walked over to Abbie, helped her up and then went to Mateo. Mateo was traumatised, who wouldn't be? He went pale, but his eyes went glossy. A single teardrop rolled down his face. And then they raced. I walked toward him and pushed him along the way home.

It's quiet now. No one speaks anymore. Occasionally, Tristan would speak up and try to engage in a conversation, but what was the point? Natalie's face was imprinted in my mind, her innocent, sweet smile, her warm aura which calmed everyone. All gone, in the matter of a second. That night I cried. I cried the whole week, maybe two weeks. I didn't keep track. I had never felt any real loss. A question bubbled on the tip of my tongue for Tristan. What was going on with his eyes? Grey and red, so far. Was he up to something? I needed answers. No. I had to be smart, I couldn't go up to him just yet, I had to wait. Patience.

After a month or so, we were slowly returning to our normal state. We needed some more clothes, so Nate, Tristan, Abbie and I went to a nearby shopping store. Abbie and I went to a casual store, whereas Tristan went into a suit store. Nate roamed near the food court waiting for Mateo, who was coming later.

"Hey...does this look good?" Abbie asked. She held up a yellow dress with tiny blue flowers- it was very elegant.

"That looks awesome, actually," I replied with a croak as my throat tightened. It reminded me of Nat's beautiful hair and eyes. I felt like breaking down again as I crumbled inside. Like, every time, something reminded me of her.

"Cool, I think I'll wear this one for the barbecue on Friday," She said.

"I'm just gonna go casual," I said quietly, holding up an oversized, red sweater and a black jean skirt.

"Still looks good, to be honest. Should we regroup?"

"Yeah, let me text the guys." I texted on the group chat, and we agreed to get some food. "We'll meet at the food court, let's get going."

We paid for the clothes and headed out to the court. On the way we saw Nate coming out of a shoe store, "Hey guys," Nate said, "Are we going now?"

"Yeah, come on, let's try and beat the other two!" Abbie challenged.

We all walked swiftly, trying not to look like we're running. We laughed our way there, slightly out of breath, since we pushed a ton of people. How many people go shopping in their dreams?

"What the hell, guys? You look like lunatics!"

We accidentally pushed Mateo whilst running, inevitably, we all laughed even more. But Abbie kept on running, "I don't know about you guys, but I plan on winning!" she screamed from across the shop floor.

"Alright! Let's get going!" I followed suit.

Soon enough we reached the colossal food court, a range of distinct smells had already diffused into the area. It smelt amazing. Burgers. Sushi. Pizza. Wraps. Tacos. Everything. My stomach grumbled... I didn't realise I was this hungry. I rolled my shirt sleeves up, as Abbie tried looking for Tristan. I tiptoed to get a better look and I saw a familiar chestnut, messy hair floating around-Tristan. I walked towards him, so we could get the gang together.

"Tristan! Hey!" I waved my arms in an attempt to grab his attention. He looked around and eventually saw me. His eyes. They were blue - Abbie must've noticed that.

"Finally! The others are coming now," she said, of course, she didn't.

"Oh, okay, what should we eat?" he asked.

"I don't know, but I do know that I am starving," Mateo said from behind me.

"Oh! You guys are here!" Abbie exclaimed, she checked her watch, "It's 2, what should we order?"

"I want sushi." Nate whispered and giggled. He was exhausted.

"Sushi it is." Tristan announced.

Nate whooped and cheered as we headed towards the shop. "Nate, are you okay?" Abbie asked whilst trying to grab a nigiri roll.

"Hmm? Oh, yeah. I'm dope! This is so yummy!" he replied.

"Bro, you're drunk for sure!" Mateo pointed out. Nate screwed his face up.

"No, I'm not!" he said, acting like a child. We all cracked up - his facial expressions were priceless.

"Alright I need to go to the bathroom," Tristan said.

"Okay, but you better not take two hours like the last time!" Abbie mocked.

"Oh, come on- I didn't see the bin!" Tristan explained.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever." she said as Tristan left the table.

A few hours later, we were walking back home. I decided to lead everyone through the back, mainly because I was afraid for Mateo remembering Natalie. I glanced at Tristan, he was acting very eerie. He covers it up with his humour and I don't know what he's hiding. His eyes changed again, now they were a blue colour. What did that mean? I really should talk to someone about this, but who? We crossed the road to get home. A very expensive car sat in front of our drive.

"Pagani Huayra Imolo, what is that doing here?" Nate asked - car fanatic?

"How did you know the car name? I've never seen that in my life." Abbie said.

"That's not important - the real question is who the hells it is." Mateo said.

I panicked, what if someone was in our house? Are there any other lucid dreamers?

"Alright guys, be careful, someone might be inside." Tristan added.

We slowly and cautiously approached our driveway, we had nothing to protect ourselves, I couldn't fight back, but I attended self-defence classes when I was younger. That didn't make this any less terrifying, however. Tristan opened the door silently and walked in tentatively. The anxiety levels escalated quicker than I could ever imagine. The house was silent, but I could hear everyone breathe. This is just a dream. This is just a dream. This is just a dream. I thought to myself. If I die here, do I die in real life, too?

Tristan was in front of everyone; he glanced around him every two seconds. Mateo and Abbie followed after him, and I was stuck with a half-drunk Nate. He knew what was going on, so he didn't make much noise, thankfully.

A sudden thud from upstairs filled the house's stillness. Crap.

"Crap." Tristan muttered under his breath.

He went to the kitchen and grabbed a rolling pin, two knives and a pan. I don't know how he managed to be so quiet when taking them out, but thank god he did. He passed the pin to Mateo, the pan to me, and the knives for himself and Abbie. I grabbed Nate and carefully pulled him up stairs with everyone else. Oh, no. I was halfway up the stairs when I remembered that the door was still open. Oh, no.

I ran down as noiselessly as I could, clutching my pan as tightly as I could and shut the door. But something stopped it. I looked down and saw half of a perfectly polished shoe. Black shoe. He pushed the door open, making me stagger back. I analysed him quickly- black suit, well fit and a black belt- he had a gun. Pistol, with a suppressor. Crap. I brought the pan up to my chest, shielding myself. He brought the gun up and aimed at my head. I pulled the pan up and rolled down at the same time. Crap. He didn't stop, he aimed again,

quicker. Abdomen. I got the pan lower, but I was deceived. Gunshot. Upstairs. He refocused as quickly as a wink and shot my calf. The silenced whistle filled the air. The bullet pierced through my skin like it was cutting through butter. A warm liquid doused my jeans. Blood. I shrieked in pain, but my adrenaline didn't fail me. Buzzing with energy and rage, I tore towards him and slung the pan into the air. As it gained force, I pulled it and crashed it onto his skull. A deafening split resonated through the room like an impulse. But he was stronger than I thought. He recovered quickly. Crap. Another gunshot. Oh, no.

He grasped my arm with a grip that could've burst my veins and shot me in the same shoulder. More blood spilled out of me. I shrieked again, this time louder. I slammed the edge of the pan in his side with my unscathed arm. This time he screeched in agony. Three gunshots. Lucky hit. He must've been hurt there before. He collapsed onto his knees in discomfort.

"Shouldn't you look for your friend?" He laughed corruptly. What was he on about? His voice was rough- it sounded exactly like Tristan's accomplice who went missing. I took this chance to grab his gun and shoot him in the guts. Not fatal, but still afflictive. He fell back in exhaustion. I fell back too. My back hit the wall behind. My adrenaline retreated in time. Although the bullets weren't anywhere sensitive, I was still shot. They felt pretty deep. I ran my fingers over my shoulder to find where exactly I got shot. Not a good idea. I whimpered as my tender skin came into contact. But I bit my lip, in an attempt to stop crying, otherwise the others would freak out. Four gunshots.

What was happening over there? No one was hurt there, right? I couldn't get myself up, a pool of blood formed from my leg, my blue jeans were now a rich red. Crap. I pulled myself towards the bathroom next to me, yelping with every movement. Blood was sprawled all along the floor. It looked deadly. I managed to open the door and snatch the towel. Another gunshot, a loud one. I flinched this time, it was a lot closer. I wrapped the towel around my calf carefully, wincing even more. But it was too late. The room swirled around. I was getting dizzy, since I lost too much blood.

I woke up in my room. No. not my real room. I wasn't awake. I looked around in wonder. I was in a hospital. I saw a small TV in the corner, the IV stand, a chair and a basic table. I recognised a familiar ginger hue next to me. Abbie.

"Oh my god, Maeve!" Her eyes were bloodshot. One had a purple blotch around it and her hair was dishevelled and her clothes were soaked in blood. She looked horrified.

"Maeve, oh my god, I thought you were dead. Oh, my god." Her voice was weak and raspy.

"What happened? Are you okay?" I asked, worriedly.

"Huh, oh yeah. No, no. I-I'm fine," She was trembling.

"Are you sure?" And then she broke, bawling her eyes out.

"Nate. He's gone," she cried. "I'm so glad you're okay. I can't, I can't anymore - I hate this place. Maeve. First Natalie and now Nate, I can't deal with this anymore."

"Nate? What happened to him?"

"He's dead! Three guys were in our house! Two upstairs and the one with you. Tristan got one covered, but I-I can't fight, but I managed to slash his eye- I ended up taking a few punches, but then he pulled a gun out and I-I panicked. And he shot Nate. And I-I couldn't do anything."

The remorse and guilt in her eyes told me everything, she didn't need to speak. My eyes watered, but I had to stay strong for Abbie.

"What about Mateo? Where is he?" I asked.

"Mateo heard you screaming. He went downstairs to help you. Did you not see him?" She wiped the tears from her face. "Crap."

"No. No one came down. Are you sure there were only three people? How many shots were fired from your room?" I asked.

"What? There were two from my room- the guy missed one and the other hit Nate," her eyes welled up again."

"Do you know how many came from Tristan's room?"

"Uh...no, maybe he had two aswell?"

"No, don't assume. Go and ask him - he must be awake now."

"Okay." Abbie left my room to check on Tristan.

A few minutes later, she returned. "Two shots - one hit him, and the other missed, why?"

"No. No. that can't be true." I said.

"Why? What are you talking about?" she questioned.

"When I was downstairs, I counted the amount of gunshots I heard. Five- I heard five shots. If you had two and Tristan had two, something must've happened to Mateo."

"What? Okay. I guess that's the only thing that makes sense. What if he's hurt? Maeve! We have to help him!"

"I know, I know! Of course, we're gonna help him! But I don't know where he is!"

"Me neither!" She looked glum- she can't afford to lose another friend, I can't lose another friend.

"Tristan might." I decided that I should tell someone about what I've seen. "Look, I don't think Tristan is on our side."

“What? Come on, you just told me not to assume things.”

“Look, just hear me out! I’ve noticed some really strange things about Tristan - his eyes, they change colour! And those guys in our house, they wore the exact same things as him!”

“It’s just a suit, Maeve! You can’t just accuse him of being immoral because of what he wears!”

“Okay, but when Nat died, his eyes were red, like totally red, and sooner or later they became green again! They sometimes turn grey, when he’s nervous, I think. Plus, in the shopping mall his eyes were blue and just before we got ambushed his eyes were blue, too! I don’t think he’s lost his powers - he is lying to us! You have to believe me!”

“Okay fine, I’ll keep tabs on his eyes - there is a possibility that he has those powers.”

A nurse came into the room. “Hi there, Maeve, since you’re awake and the operations went well, I’m going to do some tests on you and then we can decide if you can go home.”

I smiled, “Of course.”

It was around 8pm when I got discharged from the hospital. Tristan was already home. It was too late to search for Mateo and there could be more of those agents prowling around.

“Hey Maeve, you alright?” Tristan asked, I eyed him, but he was concentrating on his phone texting someone, after a few moments he looked up. “Maeve?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah I’m fine now,” I responded.

“Good, you took some big hits.”

“Yeah,” it was getting awkward, “So, I heard about Nate.”

“Oh, Nate. He told me he was drunk when we were walking home.” He got up from the sofa and walked towards me and Abbie. “Technically it’s your fault he’s dead.”

He pointed at me, his eyes became slightly red again and this time Abbie was watching attentively.

“I gave you the pan so you could protect him, and what did you do? You stranded him on the stairs, what were you thinking?” Now he looked like a vampire.

“I was thinking about closing the damn door, because someone could’ve walked straight into our house and shot us from behind- and guess what? They did.”

I stated matter-of-factly “Thanks to me and my common sense, you guys are still alive.” Now I was getting angry, “If anything, it’s your fault for being such an idiot and storming upstairs without protecting those who needed it.”

I got cut off by muffled screaming in the toilet. “Umm, who is that?”

“Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you,” Abbie said, “Thanks to your mercy, the guy you fought is still alive, and we’ve kidnapped him.”

“Kidnapped him?! Jeez, you guys! Just because there’s no real law, doesn’t mean you can kidnap people!” I exclaimed.

“He attacked us! Don’t you want to know more?” Abbie said.

“Look guys, let’s just ask him some questions. We won’t hurt him that badly anyways.” Tristan said, with the red dissolving away.

I was still angry at him, but I couldn’t show it. Now that Abbie saw his eyes, and she knows he is up to something, we should be fine.

I went into the bathroom and walked into the utility closet. There was the man I fought yesterday. He was sitting down, tied up and taped. More muffled screaming shot out of his mouth. His eyes were bruised- Tristan must’ve hit him before. His nose leaked with blood.

Tristan walked closer and knelt down intimidatingly, “Why did you attack us?” He ripped off the tape and threw it on the floor.

“The ceaseless remain of lucid dreamers, is the act on which we keep all lucid dreamers from destroying this planet. Their power is far too strong. We attacked you so you know the consequences of trying to escape. You use your powers or harm any other normal dreamers- we are the authority here. If you refuse to do what we say, punishments will be made and executed accordingly.” he spoke. He sounded like a robot, like it was rehearsed for many hours, but we couldn’t trust whatever he said fully.

“D-did you guys kill Natalie and kidnap Mateo? Where is Mateo?”

“Ah, Natalie, she was a sweet girl, but no use to us. She figured something was wrong before you ever did, so we did what we must. And Mateo, well this is part of our plan, you know; me telling you everything and you’ll get even more curious, and then you will kill yourselves, eventually.”

His rough, deep voice filled the room. Instead of long, tense hours of interrogation, why was he co-operating so well?

“What? Where is Mateo then?” I asked.

“I’m glad you asked, Maeve,” he smiled cunningly. “54, Bolder Way.”

That wasn’t too far. We’ve basically lived here, so I’m sure that we all know where to go. But this was suspicious- why would he just give the address of where he is? And why were we being targeted? I’m sure there were millions of lucid dreamers, so why did Tristan only find us? How did he find us? He was acting cynical. What was he and his gang up to? We had to get Mateo back, but

should we trust what this man says? There could be a gang waiting to ambush us- they seemed extremely well-prepared.

Tristan taped him again and we left the bathroom.

"Alright, guys. What are we going to do?" Abbie asked.

"I say we go, we need to get Mateo back," Tristan responded.

"But that guy was acting really wicked- he was crazy! Believe me, I want Mateo back too, but we can't trust him!" I said.

"Really? This is our only chance of getting him back! We don't have a choice here, Maeve!" Tristan said.

"I'm gonna go with Tristan on this one." Abbie gave me an apologetic look. "Sorry Maeve."

"Okay, look guys, if we're going there, we need to be really careful, I'm talking weapons and strategies."

"I saved the guns from the attack, they're pretty loaded," Tristan said.

"I know that 54 Bolder Way is a warehouse. We should expect a lot of 'agents' around. We should probably just grab Mateo and get out," Abbie suggested.

Tristan's eyes were a Nordic blue again, almost electric.

After a few hours, we reached the warehouse, it was like entering the house. We knew someone was there, but what were we expecting? All we need to do is get Mateo and not die trying.

We all had guns, but I stuck with Abbie to make sure she's okay during this heist. Tristan kicked the door open and walked in. We followed closely.

There was no one. Except for Mateo. He was tied and taped onto a chair, like the other guy we kidnapped but he seemed calm, too calm. Why wasn't he panicking?

Just at that moment, two guns cocked. I turned my head to the door, maybe someone entered behind like last time. But no one was there. I looked everywhere to see two scoundrels. But Mateo's suppressed outcry brought my attention to the two with me; Tristan and Abbie. Both of their guns pointed at my face.

"Anabia is mine, anything in it is mine," Tristan hissed like before. "Don't ruin my world with your filthy tricks."

"Why don't you tell her about your powers, Boss?" Abbie jeered, she turned her head to me, "I'm sure you would like to know who we really are,"

I stood there speechless, I couldn't say anything. Abbie ripped her head off. A mask came flying off her face. Tristan's assistant was Abbie all along.

“Ah, my powers. Of course. You see, I was the original creator of this world- the world you try your dirty powers on. I have many powers that you don’t, I’m too powerful for you.”

“B-but your eyes.” I managed to ask.

“Well, my eyes are merely a side effect for all my powers. I know they let me down sometimes but they represent my emotions; red means anger, grey means anxious, blue means surprised, etc.”

Since I was going to die anyway, I decided to get all the answers.

“A-and what happened to me before I met you all? There was a griffin that attacked me, and I was floating powerlessly in two different places. What happened then?”

Just then Tristan morphed into a sublime griffin- the same one that attacked me. It’s hostile, eagle eyes stared straight into my soul. Its majestic, firm feathers swayed against the wind’s current. Its bronze, tawny, slender tail shot upwards in impulse. And it pounced at me again. It readied its poise to attack. Its fierce, acicular claws sprang forward as it came to slash me. This was it. This was my end.

Its claws lashed out and dug into my frail, already weak abdomen. I could feel the blood leak into my shirt. I yelped in pain, but it was no use, no one could help me.

Electric, thorn-like surges ran through my nerves and struck my spine, with a lethal ache. Where was my adrenaline? A pounding sting engulfed my body and I couldn’t concentrate. I couldn’t hear. And soon my sight became a blinding white. I wasn’t in control.

Before, I could fade away from this world, two deafening bullets ripped through the wind and shot into my head. I fell backwards, like I was falling, but I didn’t hit anything, I just jerked up after a few moments. There I was, back in the deep blue sky. Floating around, wondering what was happening. This is just a dream. This is just a dream. This is just a dream. I thought to myself.

And it was.

I jerked into my bed. My eyes filled with alarm. I rubbed my eyes in an attempt to freshen myself. But it was no use. Beads of sweat raced down my body. I moaned in pain as a stinging

burn struck my abdomen and a throbbing pain hit my head. And then it hit me. I was finally home. I wasn’t dreaming anymore.

I got up from my bed and headed downstairs. From the kitchen I heard a voice.

“Hey Maeve, you okay?” Tristan sneered, “I told you we were going to be stuck here for a long time.”

And then the sky turned into a light, pastel colour.

A Nightmare in a Dream by Hannah Naveed

I climb the soaring tree amidst the melodious silvery clouds, as I reach out to fondle the cushion like material. A smile draws on my pale face, imagining the feeling of falling through the tranquillity, as I lay still in my bed. Almost instantly, I comprehend the sudden force of the tree, jolting me forward, as if it had a life of its own. The sensation of falling, makes my heart come into my throat and my body go limp. The boisterous thump echoes through the walls of an enclosed cave. I pinch myself. Not once, but twice. I sit up, breathless and as pale as a sheet of white snow. I wipe the sweat off my forehead with the back of my hand. I contemplate my surroundings. Horror strikes me. The cave begins to close in. I am living my nightmare.

A Teacher Speaks!

Things I Find Annoying by Abdul Hannan

1. Liars.
2. Hot weather.
3. Buffering streams.
4. Manchester United's demise.
5. Small chicken wings in a meal I've ordered.
6. Forgetting about what I was thinking/about to say.
7. A last minute goal scored by my opponent on a game of FIFA.
8. Going to the barbers, only to find that my barber isn't working that day.
9. When someone tells me to do something, even though I was planning to do it anyway (which then puts me off wanting to do it at all).
10. Waking up in the middle of an epic dream and then forcing myself back to sleep with the hope that the epic dream will somehow continue.

Blackfen school for Girls

Year 7 students

My Nightmare

The monster grabbed my neck and-
I snapped out of my nightmare
with sweat dripping down my face
I was breathing at an unsteady pace
My body was trembling from head to toe
I couldn't get the harrowing thought out
I encaged myself beneath my quilt
As the devilish nightmare consumed me whole
I lay there staring at my ceiling
My uneasy body wondering what's next.

Amelie Greenhead

NIGHTMARES BECOME REALITY!

The winds blew ferociously into the night sky
A shiver travelled down my spine
Cold sweat dripped down my face
My heart thumped against my chest
I tried to force myself to wake up. Desperately!

I sprinted further and further
I wanted it to end!
I couldn't take it anymore!
I tried to not break as my emotions took control
My spirit collapsing with every breath I took.

Thoughts raced through my mind
I have to get out of this!
I must escape!
I can't take it much longer!

The wind whispered
The clouds darkened
The leaves crunched frighteningly

I caught a glimpse of it approaching me
Closer and closer
My mind was as blank as the eyeballs of the dead

A nightmare so traumatizing
Pain so fearful
I try to wake up!
Except...

My eyes are wide open, and I am not asleep
Charanpreet Dhooper

Dreams versus Nightmares

All of the dreams inside my head
Arrive when I go to bed
They bring back fun memories
That I will remember for centuries
Dreams are like movies playing inside my brain
Some of the nightmares cause me pain
When I have nightmares I hide under the covers
I can see shadows coming from my shutters
I want to run away and hide
It's like I'm on a terror slide
I wake up in the morning and all is clear
All of the thoughts from the night before all disappear.
Ella Bromley, Yr 7

My Dream

**As I got into my cosy petite bed,
All the dreams whirled around in my head,
As I elected what dream I wanted it to be,
Which one was the one for me?**

**I finally decided the one for me:
Daisy's, sugarplums that's what it will be,
I was the queen of my fairyland on my throne,
It seemed a bit lonely all on my own.**

**Strolling around happy and free,
I decided to sit under a willow tree,
Thinking about how great life is,
It was all a blur, all a turning whiz!**

**Time to go and I was stirring,
Nothing else mattered the birds were chirping,
I said goodbye by the little stream,
I know it was only all a good dream.**

Lucy Oxley

In My Head

In my head,
During the day,
My thoughts are happy,
On a beach I lay,
Sand between my toes,
The salty air fills my nose.
Then I quickly snap back to reality
And realise I'm in my classroom,
Back into my original mentality.

In my head,
During the night,
My happy thoughts
Go from pleasure to fright,
Monsters, creatures, ghouls,

Ghastly people with lost souls.
I feel as if I'm being chased,
I run until I finally awake,
Covered in a cold sweat and my heart racing,
I lay back down,
Awaiting my next nightmare.

Ruby Townsend

Year 8 students

Dreams and nightmares story

Area of a circle is pi times the diameter. Area of a circle is pi times the diameter. Area of a circle is pi times the diameter. Area of a circle, area of a circle, area of a circle...

Whack! I had just been hit by my maths teacher with a ruler! I'm pretty sure that's not legal.

I must've fallen asleep because the whole class was looking down at their exercise books writing away. I looked up at my teacher, she raised her eyebrow with the look that said it all. I glanced back down to my book, who was aching to have something written in it, and saw a worksheet on area and circumference. I mean that is what I last heard the teacher talking about so I assume that was the work we're supposed to be doing.

I was half way through the sheet (whilst everybody else was practically finished) when I heard a gun shot. Was it outside? Was it inside? My head was swimming with questions. As I looked up I saw my maths teacher fall to the ground. What!? Everyone got to their feet unsure of what to do. Who did that? Was she dead? Someone started crying, I didn't know who but I wasn't that bothered at this minute all I cared about was the facts that my maths teacher was lying motionless on the floor. At that very moment someone walked in...with a gun! Oh god! Why was my form tutor holding a gun!? No. She didn't. She couldn't. She did!!! The worst part is that it was all my fault. Because I fell asleep in class!! Now that is some crazy loony stuff. All of a sudden the pips went. The pips, the pips, the pips, the pips.

I woke with a start. Everyone was packing away minding their own business as if nothing had happened. Because none of it had...

Alba Arendse-Hernandez

Nightmare

I am your worst nightmare,
I was the monster hiding under your bed when you were little,
I've heard all your fears.
I know how to crawl under your skin,
I will control you like a puppet.
Like an arrow hitting Achilles heel,
I know that everyone has a weak spot,
So, I will trigger yours, my love.
I will taunt you with happiness,
Just as you think you have got it,
I will snatch it away from you,
Because nothing lasts forever.
The trauma, the stress of the past will always find you.
I will trap you in your state of mind,
In your own personal hell.
I'm called a nightmare because I meet you at night,
But what if I don't leave your mind,
Even when you are awake?
What does it cost me to haunt you?
Nothing.
What does it cost you?
Your sanity.
Once I have attained what I want,
I will abandon you.
Why?
Because I have got what I wanted,
I won,
And you mean nothing to me.
I am your worst nightmare!

Beth Wood

The Shadow Like Me

The Sun begins to falter, the skyline painting with streaks of burnt orange and hues of purple. The dim chatter of people gradually falling to a silent plea for help. Amongst the people you saw while walking home, the dark formations began to stir to life, imitating every move one could make. You tug the strings of your hoodie tighter, the fear engulfing the entirety of your body. Already feeling yourself succumb to anxiousness, you quickened your pace, the silent footsteps of the shadow following beside you. Almost mockingly, the shadow grew, taunting the growing horror you felt. It's deafening whispers muttering incoherent curses to you, filling your mind with evil temptations that you desperately fight off.

Opening the door to your home, the shadow itself seemed to dissipate, the worries you were feeling quickly melting in the warm embrace of your abode. Shadows. They were feared. Feared because they were evil beings that wanted to taunt you, ruin you, destroy you. Even make you scared of being in a room alone. With shaky hands, you turned the lights on. The shadow had gone in. In your home, in your mind, in your breath. Every wary exhale you made frightened you tremendously. Its vicious mutterings increasing as it made a motion of wrapping its hands around your neck. You let out a shriek, rushing, running. Run. Flinging the door open, you stop in the bathroom. Lights. On. The faint apparition of the shadow directly beside you, hands around your neck still. You let go, gasping for air. Staring at the mirror in front of you, the shadow began to dance across the walls, before following your hand movements towards the slab of glass.

With a frightened gasp, you touched the mirror, your eyes filled with the darkest black, almost as if they were rolled back and the whites had darkened. Your fear pulsed in your body, travelling throughout every crevice. With a shortening of breath, your eyes rolled back into respective place, lips curved upwards the more you stared at yourself.

Letting go of the mirror, you reminisce on all the times you were told not to play with your shadow, even not to spare a glance to them. Why? Without you, they are inanimate. Without you, they are not able to scare you. Without you, they do not exist. Merely a figment of the sun creating a dark area or shape because of a body in frame. Without you, they are nothing. All you feared, was yourself. All you were hiding from, was a part of you, something you would never, and could never rid of. A darkness within you, that one day, will no longer have to wait to catch up with you.

One day, the nightmare you lived will, will be no longer, forever be bound to you. You must refrain from letting the dark persona get to you, otherwise,

your nightmare, will become you. You are the shadow; the shadow is you. Now all you have to do, is admit it, too.

Fariha Ahmed

Dreams and Nightmare

I live in a world sparsely populated with the ongoing fear of dying the next day. The only escape from hell is your dreams, a high-tech world where you can live the life you dream of. The limits are endless. It's simple: you go to sleep, place the small robotics behind your ears and you are into the world.

It gives you a sense of euphoria, a rush through your body making you believe it's real. Except you never forget about the world, you aren't left clueless intrigued to remember the best moment of your life. It's a memory inside your head making you exhilarated and wanting more. You could say it's like being addicted to something, tearing down everything until you are left satisfied. You are left believing nothing bad will ever happen. But what if it did?

Until the programme was hacked and the nightmares began. Imagine your worst fears compacted into a major game, that's Nightmare. Only if you get through ten levels of your fears, do you go back to the real world. If you fail, you start again and again, trapped inside the hi-tech world for weeks, months, years, and who knows if you will survive?

Izzy Barnes

Complicated and Confusing

I couldn't breathe. I felt as if someone was preventing me from moving. The room was spinning around me and suddenly, the whole world stopped.

It was me and only me, back on the bus. Why was I here? My body was weirdly relaxed and sunk into the red squishy seat that I was impolitely laying across. I rested my eyes, trying to work out why.

I sat up alarmed and came to the realisation that I was no longer on a bus, but on a rickety wooden swing hanging from the porch of an old derelict house. I felt like I was being watched, so I turned, not knowing that there would be a frightening looking man standing over me. He was wearing an eye patch and had cavities on almost every tooth. His mouth was moving, and I saw spit spraying everywhere with each unclear word spoken. He had a disturbing look on his face, and I could make out from his lips that he wanted me to leave, but I couldn't. My senses were dull and all I could do was close my eyes.

A rush of relief came over me, as I felt that I was back in my warm, normal bed. Abruptly, I fell. Falling into nothingness, I felt all my blood rush to my head. I couldn't breathe.

I unexpectedly sensed my feet meeting the floor and bringing me into a room. A dark room struck with one single candle that was lit in the corner. Before I could process, I was suddenly face to face with a book. I picked it up and the pages flew over until they reached chapter 101. The title was darkest fears. I put my hands on my face and sighed. I knew what was coming and without a second to think there was something crawling up my neck. I continued to stand completely still. My body was somehow paralysed and all I could think about were spiders. I could see too many spiders around me, and it created an uneasy atmosphere. I felt like I was being watched again but this time I decided not to look. I tried to stay calm, but in the end, I broke. I ran trying to find a way out of this room. I sprinted so fast whilst having a mental break down, that I flew into a wall. I felt my head hit the floor, and all the spiders crawling into every orifice, bringing my cold red blood that had formed a puddle around me, with them. Everything went dark, and I felt all leave my body.

I awoke once again, but this time I was still in the same room, apart from the fact that there were no spiders and no blood. I looked down to see that my feet were hovering above the concrete ground. My eyes glided past something on the floor, it looked like a body, I feared myself dying, not someone else. Room 101 is my fears, so maybe I was dead. I panicked again and ran to the wall, but this time, I raced right through it. I really *was* a ghost! When did the afterlife begin and how long before I was taken to hell?

A flash of red rushed past me and I was swooped off my inexistent feet and I felt a sharp pain in my arm. I woke again and saw fire. Lots of fire and smoke. My lungs were full of it. I could feel that my insides were twisting up inside of me. I didn't know where I was, and why I was here, but what I did know was that if I didn't get out now I would regret it.....

Jess Hinxman

Colour Codes

“Happy birthday to you...”

My mum set the cake down as the song came to an end. There was no smile on my face. Just a tense frown. How could I smile, when it's my 16th birthday?

When you turn 16, a colour appears on the side of your face. It can either be two colours. If you get red, you're safe. Blue? Not so much. It may be

puzzling, but these colours determine whether you'll be living in your dream or your nightmare.

Most of my family always got red, they were known as the "Dream Family". But when my sister got blue...she became an outcast. My parents disowned her, because they felt ashamed to have a nightmare in their house. They disposed of my sister to save their reputation.

I stared at the candles for a while. They moved slightly yet no one moved an inch or made a sound. The wax was shaped into a number. 16. It was gradually melting, so I took a deep breath, and blew. Darkness. My dad turned on the light as I pushed my hair away to reveal the side of my face.

"What?!" My mum started to back away, disbelief in her face. My dad tried to rub the colour away viciously.

"Dad, stop! What's the colour?" He ran and grabbed a mirror and shoved it in my face. I flinched, eyes glued shut.

"Look!"

I hesitantly opened my eyes and saw my face. A small gasp escaped my mouth. A pretty lilac hue coated the side of it. I admired the colour, mesmerised by its beauty. What it meant, I overlooked in that moment.

"What does it even mean? The only two colours you can get are...blue and red..." My mum put a hand to her mouth. I stared my mum straight in the eye.

"When you mix blue and red together, what do you get, mother?"

A tear rolled down her face. "Purple..."

Leah Kempton

60 Seconds

60 seconds is all I have.

My thoughts are louder than ever,

Yet my words are just bubbles.

I reach for air just to capture it in my hand,

To feel the breeze flow between my fingers.

I am suffocating and there's nothing I can do,

50 seconds.

It is not like what you see in the movies,

It is tranquil even when in suffering.

But there is a time limit to beat,

To reach the top and take a gasp.

40 seconds.

This is my reality,

I am living the same nightmare on repeat.
I have no escape,
I must face my fate and reveal my destiny.
30 seconds.
Through my determination: I can feel my legs being gripped,
Like vines wrapping around a tree.
20 seconds.
Help.
I can't breathe,
My eyes are pressured to close.
10 seconds.
Silence.
Darkness.
Pain.
Gasp.....
It may feel like reality, but it was only a nightmare.

Lily Roostan

My midnight flight

I dream about flying high in the sky,
I raise my arms and take off without trying,
To civilization I wave goodbye,
I find myself up high flying,
Passing buildings and clouds,
I gaze upon the world below,
Observing people beneath me gathered in crowds,
Soaring higher and higher until I know,
To the rest of the world I am out of sight,
The enormous sense of freedom,
As I enjoy my dreamy midnight flight.

Nancy Whyton

Sleep Paralysis

Sleep paralysis is what it is,
it is what keeps me awake nightly,
The other demons are just minions of his,
They have me in their grasp so tightly.

Help me, they don't want me here,
Their screams filling my head,
With the things I don't want to hear,
"We want to be your friends!" they said.

Sleep paralysis is what it is,
It is what keeps me awake nightly,
The other demons are just minions of his,
They have me in their grasp so tightly.

It keeps happening, it's becoming normal,
They come to me in the dead of night,
Their behaviour is most abnormal,
As I'm afraid their faces show delight.

Sleep paralysis is what it is,
It is what keeps me awake nightly,
The other demons are just minions of his,
They have me in their grasp so tightly.

I have accepted them as my new friends,
They're not what they used to be,
Their eyes are as bright as ruby gems,
There's never more than three.

Sleep paralysis is what it is,
It is what keeps me awake nightly,
The other demons are just minions of his,
They have me in their grasp so tightly.

They left me one day,
They took the old me with them,

What were they? Who were they?
They left me always feeling glum.

Sleep paralysis is what it is,
It is what keeps me awake nightly,
The other demons are just minions of his,
They have me in their grasp so tightly.

Olivia Britton

Wonderland

She peeked down in wonder
Thought it would be easy
But as soon as she slipped
She felt a little queasy

She fell like a feather
Drifting Side to side
She searched for the rabbit
He probably went to hide

She finally reached the bottom
And tried to look up top
She could only see a table
She could reach it with a skip and a hop

She squeezed through the little door
There was no sign of the rabbit
She carried on biting her lip
She needs to snap out of that habit

She joined a merry unbirthday
With food and cakes galore
She felt a bit nauseous
But secretly wanted more

She felt like a princess in a palace
With teacups scones and more
This 'she's' name was Alice
And she had been dreaming since she walked through the door

Frankie Moger

Dreams and nightmares

Silence
No not silence
That is not the right word

Silence sounds too sinister
This sound was much more relaxed

I look out to the world outside
Only the light of the moon and stars light up the night sky
The frosty breeze sends shivers down my spine
I quickly pull down the window, I don't want to let the cold inside

I sat at the end of my rusted bed frame before slumping back into my sheets
I shut my eyes and begin to sleep
I fall into a new unilluminated space and appear in a new place

It is a disorganised wonderland
The violet sky is spotted with clouds
Stars hang from the sky, interwoven with fairy lights
It gives the scene a cozy atmosphere

I walk through this new mystical place with wide eyes
It is a jungle of light and dark
Below the surface, you can hear gentle running water
The sound of splashing waves fills my ears

But as soon as I start to take it all in
It starts to fade away
The darkness once again returns
I now realise I am completely vulnerable to what lies ahead

I open my eyes and I can see
My parents standing right in front of where I stand
They seem to be... crying?
I try to talk to them but it seems that they can't hear me

I start to scream but I do not make a sound
I try to run to them but I just fall to the ground
I turn to the mirror but there is no one there
I am not there

I start to tell myself that it is not real
But I know that is not true
This **feeling** of undeniable fear is real

Because I believe it is

I wake up with a jolt and look to the ceiling
The dimmed lights look crimson in the soft glow of the morning sun
I exhale slowly and sit up
My eyes are still fuzzy

I let my mind drift off for a second before coming back to full consciousness
I want to stay in my bed
Between half open eyes I can see the clock, 7:30 am
“Alright, time to do this all again...”

Millie Brimble

Evelina Hospital

Molly's Dreamland

In my dreamland...

There is sushi everywhere on little conveyor belts
There are bright blue pools to swim in to make me feel refreshed
Every object is coloured red
as that is my favourite colour

In my dreamland...

Everyone is happy and the animals are all hanging out together
The birds are singing everywhere
the deer are jumping as they are happy too

There are elephants hanging out with me
we go off and play in the mud together

In my dreamland...

It's always sunny and over 20 degrees
and there's a park full of snow that's not cold

There are my friends and my family
and only good people

There are zip wires to get you around.
That means there is no pollution.
There is pure, fresh air
and it makes everyone happy.

Molly, 12

Cake

In my dream, I awoke with the smell of a delicious, beautiful cake.

Not just any cake! A red velvet cake!

I cut a slice and a rainfall of skittles delighted my eyes.

I had a massive banquet waiting for me to enter. I sat down along with my guests – everyone in the world – and we started to eat.

Before I realised it was a dream. The banquet vanished along with my guests and I opened my eyes. I awoke with disappointment and anger in my stomach and I found out that I wasn't able to eat my desired food. Instead I was given a plonk of vegetable soup.

Halima, 12

In My Dream

In my dream there are painted purple flowers

In my dream it is sunny and that makes me happy

In my dream there is only spaghetti and custard with brown cake in it

In my dream my mum is there and I give her lots of cuddles

In my dream there is lots of painting to do, brushes and paint and paper flower shapes and something to cover the table that helps you dry your brush off

In my dream there are colouring books and pencils

Ibtisam, 9

My dream

I dream about when I become a famous cricketer – become the best. I keep hitting sixes and we will always win.

I dream when I become rich I will have a mansion in the countryside with five supercars. My favourite one would be a McLaren. I will have five bedrooms over six floors and a huge garage. On the sixth floor, I will have a cinema that will seat thirty people.

In the back garden there is a heated swimming pool with a jacuzzi by the side. In the basement, I have a safe where I store my Rolex and other valuable items.

On the ground floor, I have a gaming room, which has a snooker table, table tennis and all my consoles.

I dream about when I become a famous cricketer.

Alfie, 12

Lego School

Dear Diary

Today was my 1st day of Lego school (for me at least). My parents moved me half way across the city. I was so mad. See, my mother is what I call a Karen. She's so huggy and sensitive. One time I went to a McDonalds drive thru and had to go back round because there were no napkins. At least she didn't send me to one of those private schools where the kids have more money than the teachers combined. So this is where I'll be for the next 4 years of my life.

Reuben, 12

Robots

Dear Diary,

My day today was EXTREMELY busy. I had lots of very important jobs which had to be done. My job in this dream world was to PHYSICALLY create other robots and adjust and train them to help organise the buffet. I can't talk long cos if I get caught they might change my job which I'm getting lots of money for. However, the others get very little money for their jobs. When I come back home I get run over by lots of thoughts and it makes me feel stressed. When I get stressed, there's nothing that helps. When I come back home I do lots of things, starting with breathing, followed by experiments and creating new and quicker ways to create robots, so it will take me less time.

Halima, 12

The Kracken and the Liopleurodon

Dear Diary,

I made robots with the other massive robot today. Whatever piece of rubbish we find; we make into a robot or furniture. Some robots go to hospitals; some go to the moon so they can find out more about it.

I made the big massive robot because I was too tired to make the robots by myself. Sometimes I look for the kracken – the octopus who has teeth and can drag an entire ship down to the bottom of the sea.

Sometimes I go in a submarine and sometimes a ship.

Sometimes I'm scared and sometimes I'm not. I'm about to go on a trip. I use a special kind of bullets and when it hits something it explodes, to keep me safe from the Kracken. The Kracken could take down a whole hospital!

I'm looking for the Kracken because it took down millions of fisherman, who died because the Kracken has teeth – and if it has teeth, it eats people! The fishermen's boats are sinking.

Some robots help – human shaped ones – they help with the ship and the submarine. I feel scared and worried that my boat will go down. But there's one thing that the Kracken is scared of – The Liopleurodon. A prehistoric dino who lived a long time ago. I know there's a Liopleurodon out in the ocean somewhere. I've spent half of my life looking for one but I've never managed to find it. A Liopleurodon attacked our ship and killed my father.

The Kracken is scared of the Liopleurodon and the Liopleurodon is scared of the Kracken because they could kill each other.

When I go out to sea, it means danger is going to come soon.

Noah, 7

Dreams

I dream of being six

I dream of swimming

I dream of noise

really big noise

I dream of being a footballer

of kicking the ball up so high

over the other players

Cruz, 5

I Had A Dream

I had a dream

That the world would be a better place

That people won't be judged by the colour of their appearance

I had a dream

That white children would be a lot nicer to other races

I had a dream

That there will be black teachers in schools to show diversity and experiences

I have a dream that all people will be equal

Reuben, 12

Dreams

I have a dream that we will see dogs run again and they will no longer live in fear of us monsters. I have a dream they will bounce in a confident run. I hope they learn to trust us again and wag their tails when they are happy and that they bring back their soft gentle smiles.

I have a dream that the chickens will no longer be cooped up and feel suffocated. I hope to see them hopping around on the lush green grass and breathe the fresh air. I have a dream they will have a healthy stress free life with somewhere safe to lay their eggs.

I have a dream the chimpanzees will be able to be at comfort and no longer be chained and restricted. I hope they will live in their wildlife with their mothers and have fun and play without any worries. I have a dream they will smile and not cry in fear.

I have a dream to end animal abuse.

Lucy, 15

Happy and Free

When you're eating and you throw rubbish away, it goes into the sea. The sea plastic makes the animals poorly. If there was not plastic they would be free and happy. I would be really happy that the Earth was not sad. Sea animals – I hope you have lots of good shells to live in.

Levin, 8

I Have A Dream

I have a dream
We look at one another without having
any thought on what their ethnicity is

I have a dream
I'm not treated differently because of my
religious belief or background

I have a dream
that everyone is responsible for their actions
Not their religion or others that share the same belief

I have a dream
That a crime should have the same consequences for everyone
shouldn't be compromised because of the person's ethnic background
or how much they earn

I have a dream
Everyone can have the freedom to believe what they wish to
Without caring about others' opinions

I have a dream
That we accept everyone as they are whether they be
Gay, straight. Religious, non-religious or from a specific ethnic background.

Hassan, 17

I DREAM

I dream of getting rid of bullies, all of the bullies
I dream of building houses for me and mum and dad, a big house
I dream of music on headphones because mum doesn't like it loud
I dream of a blue pool with fish – blue, yellow, red, purple fish
I dream of swimming with them and diving in from the diving board
I dream of big speakers and dancing

Ali, 9

A Dream of Peace

I have a dream that when we speak
people hear and see us
and pay full attention

I have a dream that a dove will fly
over the skies of the world
and a rainbow encircle the Earth

I have a dream that communities will be rebuilt
and children can play with their friends without being scared.

I have a dream that soldiers come back to their families
and refugees come back to their homes

Oksana, 15

Same freedom

I have a dream,
That one day, people of different class, ethnicity and gender get to walk
along the same street,
Same crime,
Same sentence,
Same freedom.

I have a dream,
That people are taught right and wrong through doing good, not by sitting
in a cell.

I have a dream,
That children of those who did wrong get to see their family and not suffer
for their crime.

I have a dream,
That people will realise this cycle of crime is broken through education, not
isolation.

I have a dream,
A dream to change how society deals with wrong,
I believe wrong cannot be fixed through punishment, but through
knowledge.

Veronica, 14

Forest Hill School

The following pieces of writing were produced for a year 9 creative writing competition at Forest Hill School. The theme was 'My Dreams, My Nightmares' and pupils could write freely in any form they liked. Well done to all involved, the work is very inspiring!- Ms Suart

Dreams

How do you define a dream?

Is it just an illusion in your head? Is it a room full of needles trapping you?

Or is it more than that, is it an ambition you hope to happen, but in reality, you know that it won't be able to happen.

We all have something that we want to happen, however there is always going to be something pushing you down and not letting you accomplish YOUR dream.

However much you try to prove yourself to others around you, you will still be judged on how you look, your preferences, but especially being yourself.

Most of us have been pressured into being someone or something that we are not in order to fit in to the puzzle, which in reality only hurts us more.

Dreams are Dreams, ambitions are ambitions but YOU are YOU.

Angel Velez Salazar

Wildfire

Tales spread like wildfire, encapsulate the entire city at a moment's notice. In fairness, this is only because there is so much wood to be burned, a hole left in people's hearts by just how boring a place like this gets. To pass the time, people make up stories about the guy in trend to be made fun of at the time. That's how it spreads – this odd need to fuel the flames.

There's only one person immune to the cycle – the type who's intriguing; poses questions without answers. For a city so alive with gossip I've never been given an explanation for why someone like that hasn't captured the imagination of anyone.

Well, that's not strictly true. Perhaps I ought to say 'anyone else'. Though I don't make up ridiculous stories or gossip like most everyone else, I need a way to burn the time. This pointless mystery might be the only thing I

ever accomplish at the rate I'm going. Having such a boring place means as soon as they can, people get out of here and leave the rest to try and pick up the pieces.

"Olivia! Hey," Mary calls out from behind me. For two people with so little in common, we're surprisingly close.

"Hey," I repeat, too exhausted to think of my own response

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothing,"

"And you know you've been doing nothing for at least a solid twenty minutes,"

"I was thinking," I reply, the most I can say without lying

"Well then, why don't you come in for a while and do some thinking where you won't contract a cold,"

"Thanks, but I'm fine,"

"I wouldn't say so." Mary takes off her scarf and wraps it around my neck. We are allowed to wear our own clothes to school but I never dress for the weather. It can be hard to pretend the chill doesn't get to me. "Why don't you stay over tonight? Mum would be glad to have someone else in the house, I can guarantee it. I'm sure it's why she's so many people's emergency contact."

"How does that come up in so many conversations?"

"Because – you're already more of a daughter to the lady than I am. God, I swear she wants to disown me,"

"You're exaggerating,"

"You sure? You didn't see her face when I got thirty out of fifty in the maths test." Mary is one of the most competitive people I've met, even at tests. Even so, she's a pretty good sport even if she takes things to heart a little too often. "You're really not staying?" I shake my head. "Fine, just get home already." She says caringly.

Begrudgingly, I set off for home. The walk isn't too far from here but it knows how to take a long time anyway.

I heard somewhere that people present themselves a certain way based on where they're from. It's as though the people that you meet leave their impression on the way you sit, stand, walk, talk. Doesn't that mean that everything came from somewhere, someone who was entirely separate when they weren't changing those around them? Perhaps those people bear some resemblance to the girl standing in front of me now. Ashley, the one free of rumours mostly by virtue that she never gives anything away.

Though I spend more of my time thinking about it, I'm sure that everyone else at this school would die to know her, hear what she's thinking. I've also

heard that her looks have caught the attention of many boys our age but they're more the type to keep it to themselves.

Thinking about it, the most anyone really knows about her is her name, her hair, if you're lucky – her face, and maybe her voice. She's not exceptionally smart nor dumb at all which means that barely anyone shares every class with her but even I wouldn't be too thrilled to sit next to someone who sleeps through every class she's in and never talks unless the teacher singles her out. I would bet money that she doesn't even try to look as good as she does because she never puts any effort into anything.

Something about her is so attractive and yet so repulsive. I go to bed at eight o'clock because there is literally nothing to fill the time. Alone in my room, I take a moment to take it in – the blue walls, old posters, neglected corners. Everything has been ignored, left to fester. It has to be somewhat sad that the highlight of my day is being able to lie in bed, not dealing with any of my problems. With little imagination, the time spent before I go to sleep is filled with blank nothingness though it is thankfully short. Soon, I am asleep and all the world around me crumbles out of sight.

In my waking unconsciousness, I am alive. I have a pulse, feel pain; have a tangible body. I know already that I have never seen my bed before and still my body knows it unlike my mind. My bed is not my bed though the contours of the mattress align with my body. I watch the pink walls move around the room to fill every organised inch of the small space. I know it because I wake up to it every day and yet everything is off.

Voices resonate through the walls, voices I know that belong to strangers. Why does my head hurt? Downstairs, the voices of my parents are louder and the things they are screaming at each other are audible like they were in the room. I can hear a male voice, deep and yet unmasculine and am broken from my trance – those are my parents just as much as that room was mine.

In the bathroom I shouldn't know about, my reflection explains as much as I have puzzled out. Ashley's face stares at me from past the glass, her hands reach up to my face to pull it apart in thought. As I stand lost in my mind, the thoughts of hers that plagued my head are lost and finally, the coldness in my fingertips, the deadness in my eyes return and what is left is neither me nor her. I ignore my headache to reason that I am simply dreaming and run outside, still in her pyjamas. For some odd reason, her body seems to fit me, loose pink pyjamas clinging on to me as if they could let go should they feel like it.

When the glare from the rising sun has finally disappeared, my eyes are met with a surprise. Instead of fanciful, surreal surroundings, Ashley's house remains solid, planted firmly in a row of similarly mundane houses from the poorer side of town. It is however a good vantage point over the many

skyscrapers and office blocks that stop the wind from reaching us. It is also clear, from this height, that there is a clear divide between the sectors of the city. It makes sense just as well as the real world which is admittedly often odd. For a dream, things make too much sense – almost as if I'm seeing somewhere real. Dreams typically never show one anything they have not already seen and yet this side of the world is completely foreign to me and still completely realised in my subconscious.

My headache grows past the threshold of being ignorable and I have to really fight to believe what I'm seeing is a dream.

To ease my mind, the alarm on my bedside table wakes me. Somehow, it feels different to wake up in these bedsheets than it was to get up in my dream. My room looks like it should however one specific corner looks like it has been tidied fairly recently - my books are organised and posters aligned properly with the ceiling. My body has lost some of its permanence, as if I am less whole than when I was asleep. It feels correct but unsettling, like a harsh reality I shouldn't have accepted. Why do I feel so tired?

At school, everyone has already separated into their groups and are chatting amongst themselves when she walks in. For a moment, everyone is quiet and I feel incredibly tense and embarrassed on her behalf. Ashley across the playground but is stopped in the centre of it, in plain sight of all the other students. I can barely make out people reaching for their phones to take a picture because the most notable, pretty and elusive girl in the school has walked into school in pink pyjamas. We lock eyes for a moment and she seems to be broken from a trance. The chill gets to her and the poor girl's face goes bright red when she realises that around a hundred people who barely know her face are watching her in her bedclothes.

I slap the phone out of Mary's hands but already the playground is alight with the flashes of phone cameras. Mary's complaining about her newly cracked screen are drowned out when a sudden headache hits me and my knees go weak. With hands clutching my head, I drop to the floor and out of the corner of my eye I can see Ashley mirror me, pushing away the girls surrounding her.

I'm only barely conscious as I get dragged to the medical room but I can hear enough of what people are saying. Even as the playground clears out with people heading to tutor, accusations of my faking a headache to follow Ashley are thrown around. Regardless, most of the talk is about her and something clicks inside me. This one, incredibly weird incident has inspired countless lies and gossip because everyone was waiting for some ammunition to finally start shooting their dumb stories into the wind. None catch because every minute someone has something more ridiculous to say.

We get sat down on plastic chairs likely because there's no good way to decide who gets the bed. In fairness, I would let her have it but the teachers have gone to assist in keeping the assembly hall quiet. It's nice to have a moment alone with Ashley but neither of our headaches are gone.

"I had a nightmare," Ashley suddenly says. I think she's thought of something already. "Where I was different, more... just different. I woke up in the dream, changed and checked my reflection," "You saw my face, didn't you?"

"At first I did, but then something changed and I went back to the bedroom and started to put things in order which it had only just occurred to me to do. And then I woke up for real but I was neither you nor myself,"

"And you were wearing the pyjamas I hadn't changed out of when you got to school,"

"Same nightmare?"

"It didn't feel quite so bad."

"What's your name, stranger?"

"Olivia,"

"Ashley,"

"I know."

Ashley does a few checks to make sure she's awake including looking up at the ceiling, pinching herself and asking herself outright a few times. I bite my gums and try to think it over a bit. "What were the colours of my walls?" Ashley asks

"Pink,"

"Blue,"

"So this is real?"

"Firstly, what is **'this'**?"

Our conversation is cut short as a teacher returns and tells us that our emergency contact is coming to pick us both up. Ashley asks what he means by 'both' but I already know exactly what it means. For some reason, fate won't let us leave each other's company.

In Mary's mother's car, the atmosphere is incredibly cold. With every question we alternate giving one syllable answers but, bless her, she keeps trying to start a real conversation. "Well, it's nice to see you both together for once. I always seem to catch you girls separately. Perhaps this could be a blessing in disguise, h'm?"

It's my turn to murmur a response but I'm too busy thinking about what she had just said, that Mary sees Ashley often to do so. As Ashley takes my place, I struggle to not voice my thoughts aloud. It's almost as if a secret has been kept

from me, that for some reason unknown to me I have been excluded from the loop.

We're left alone to watch TV as Mary's mother works so for the second time, I'm given a proper look at Ashley. She's pretty, sure, but something about her looks different. I recognise her and so something about her looks is less special. It occurs to me that I am surprisingly used to seeing her in nightclothes already considering the vibrant pink hasn't caught my eye once since leaving the school.

I realise that our hands are on top of each other and try to take mine off, only to realise hers was on top. My hand looks odd and inhuman. It's not awkward, only strange as Ashley does the same. Perhaps we had only just done it though I didn't move consciously. I find myself putting my hand back and I stop caring about which one that is. It surprises me when we're brought in two lunches. I know I didn't forget about Ashley so I must have forgotten about myself. It tastes nice despite the way I'm feeling.

Ashley gets taken off around the time school would finish by her mother. She says very little to her but there's no real rush or anger in the way Ashley is dragged off, despite the lack of an explanation for what she's wearing. Her mother sounds how she did in my dream and if there wasn't enough to prove the insane events of this morning already, there's no doubt in my mind now. I think we're both still trying to work out how to process this because there is too much evidence to prove our connection and yet it is still totally implausible.

My mother finally picks me up without a word. I get home and write the note 'go with it' to be left out on the bedroom floor. It's almost impossible to productively fill the time left in the day so I laze about, do some reading and think some more about Ashley and what Mary's mother said.

Having made up my mind, I ask Mary to meet me at the park and head out, still without uttering a word to my mother. It's chilly but I actually don't care this time.

"What is it?" Mary asks

"You lied," I respond. It's been confirmed in my mind. Everything has started to make sense but it also means I have to doubt what my only real friend has assured me of for the longest time. "About what?" she says

"Ashley."

"What about her, Olivia? Spit it out."

"Everyone knows, don't they?"

"Start making sense or I'll just go home now,"

"They all know what she looks like, what she sounds like, why she doesn't talk to people, what's going on at home. I'll bet they are all just as chummy with her as you are."

"What are you?"

“Your mother let it slip. I know you’ve been keeping the truth from me so just give it up already. What is going on?” Mary sighs and hangs her head a bit lower. When she speaks again, she mumbles through every syllable. “The whole mystery thing was in your head. You were like the only person who didn’t already know all that because people try to stay away from you,” “And you didn’t tell me because...?”

“I just wanted to be something, okay? I didn’t want to play second fiddle to someone like that,”

“What does that mean?”

“You know, someone like...”

“Yeah, I do.”

I leave, pretending to not hear Mary call after me. Yet, she leaves me alone like she knows what she did. Just the fact that my own friend would lie to my face to feel special. ‘Someone like that’. She really means someone like **me** – someone who had something happen to them and can’t just sweep it under the rug. I don’t care about the mystery anymore. I’ve gotten my answers and I hate them.

I go to bed, annoyed but not as upset as I probably should be. It makes too much sense to be upsetting. Perhaps I was projecting my situation onto Ashley and we’re not actually that similar. Gossip really evades her because people have the answers they want, all but me. I’m the damp wood that doesn’t catch fire, an annoyance, someone like **that**. I almost already expected it and I don’t care anymore. The way Mary gave me the answers I asked for almost felt like she was just done with the game – it wasn’t fun at that point. She’s done toying with the girl without a father. I let myself fall to sleep, trying to get away from my realisations. The truth can really sting.

The pink walls, compulsive tidiness, pyjamas – I know where I am. I eat and change to avoid a repeat of yesterday and find myself admiring a nice outfit in the mirror. It makes me almost look younger, a look I almost recognise and my face could almost fit it but something is definitely off. Regardless, it almost makes me want to get a nicer wardrobe of clothes but it doesn’t really suit me. I sneak a bit closer to the stairs that lead up to her parents’ bedroom to eavesdrop on what they’re shouting about. When I can understand what they’re arguing about, the conversation begins to sound very reminiscent of what my parents used to shout about before dad left. In fact, it sounds **too** similar. When I was shouting at Mary, she didn’t dispute or seem shocked when I mentioned ‘what’s going on at home’ almost as if she knew there was something noteworthy about it. This feud then, is probably somewhat common. My doubts about us being similar are dispelled and I have to help her not do the same stupid things I did.

I throw some random stuff around to cause a commotion. When I hear their door open, I try to make it look unintentional and start putting it back.

“Are you alright?” Ashley’s mum asks

“Yeah, sure. I just had a small accident is all. I was just about to head out,” My tone and actions contradict this because I want her to show some affection to the girl I know has been a bit neglected by and worried about them.

“Come here,” She calls softly. She gives me a big hug and Ashley’s dad comes and hugs us both. It feels really nice to have this affection but I’m not the one who needs it. I close my eyes and give in to my blue walls and lack of a real father and shut off mother because this is a step towards something else that I want Ashley to take with them.

It shouldn’t feel quite as upsetting as it does to leave her life behind but I feel better with this understanding. It’s as if a weight has been lifted from my shoulders and I take a deep breath in commemoration. I wake up for the second time but I feel fully like myself, probably because I chose to surrender my time to Ashley and the reverse happened to me.

At school, Ashley half-runs up to me and wraps her arms around me. In as awkward a way as possible, I leave mine dangling at my sides. When she releases me, her expression... She looks happy to see **me**. It draws little attention, thankfully, likely because hardly anyone is here yet. When the playground starts to fill up, I can hear and see people murmuring about us, only about what happened yesterday.

Eventually, Mary arrives and comes over to me sheepishly, looking like she’s trying to hold something back. “I’m sorry – sorry about what I said yesterday and sorry for keeping that from you,”

“I’m not going to hold that against you after everything you’ve done for me. You don’t need to be the best to mean something to me,”

“I’m so sorry.” Her voice is quiet with tears “I’ll see you around,”

“See you.” I know that getting mad isn’t going to solve anything and besides, something else is on my mind.

It’s four O’clock and I already miss Ashley. I care probably way too much but I have a nagging urge to go see her. I put it off as long as I can but it starts to burn my insides and I call out ‘Bye’ as I leave the house in a rush. For a city that’s normally so gloomy, the breeze feels so perfect and as I get further away from home, the sun looks more perfect dancing on every windowsill. The smell of flowers permeates through the air and the sounds of the birds is louder and louder.

I follow the memory that first dream left me to get to her house and don’t even second-guess where I’m going once. Before I can knock, Ashley opens the door and we stand there, waiting for a long while until she puts her hand on

my face and we kiss. I know to embrace her and though I would never have thought to kiss her, I can't think of anything else anymore.

Almost like magnets, we moved towards each other. However inexplicable it was, what's mine is hers and what's hers is mine – we share dreams, nightmares and now a kiss.

We haven't moved, not physically, but there's only one thing still standing there. She's what I might have been and I'm what she might yet be but the only thing left is alive and there in the moment. One of us takes the other's hand and though I don't know who it was, I know neither of us is going to let go.

Adam Perry

Frostbite

Dreams are confusing to understand. Some dreams are incoherent regurgitations of things you've already seen, some dreams are twisted versions of what you want to see and then there are those other types of dreams. The type you can't explain.

The train comes to a halt and I read the words I see too often on the screen up above: 'This is the final destination'. I dozed off again and am now three stops from home that none of these trains do for a good hour. At least, not in the direction I want. It's raining fairly heavily outside which makes for a nice backdrop within the station but makes it miserable outside. Before people start crowding in for shelter, I go and buy a cheese and ham croissant from a nearby café and eat it whilst watching the loop of advertisements on the screens around the station.

I recall having a dream about some brown-haired girl. She was kinda cute but I've never met her before and the details are fuzzy too. It was a nice dream... I think. I remember the sensation of enjoying it but I don't remember why at all. I plot down whatever I can about the dream in my notebook and put it back into my pocket.

The station's become like a second home to me recently so I brought money and an umbrella just in case something like this happened. Above the main entrance to the station, there's a large window which lets shadows of the rain run through the station, highlighting the paths of the invisible people who frequent the station. Some kids start playing a game of trying to keep pace with the shadows when they start to change.

The monotony of rain becomes a mixture of hail and snow and the sounds outside become much louder. People run into the station and start really

packing in, buying hot food and drinks in ridiculously long and disorderly queues. Some time passes and the trains get delayed as the snow has started really piling up. It was like this last year, two-faced weather that was always unpredictable. Well, we were expecting snow sometime this week but you still never really know.

It's not normally a big deal but I don't do so well with crowds. I think it's an acquired thing because I've had a few bad experiences with them before so in general, I try to stay away. It's starting to get a bit crowded in the station so I take the chance to put up my umbrella and walk out into the cold.

Thankfully, the hail has stopped but it's still snowing lightly, making crunching noises as it lands on my umbrella and as it breaks underfoot. There's a large road just outside the station but the buildings that line it are relatively small with a few exceptions. The station towers over almost everything else and definitely has the largest footprint. Honestly, even though I know where a few places are here, I have no idea where to go. Probably, most food places will either be packed or closed but it's still better than having nothing to do in the station.

"Hiya." Someone calls out. It surprises me a bit considering how quiet things have become outside. It takes me a while to realise that they're talking to me and to formulate the perfect response: "Hello,"

"Sorry, you seemed lost,"

"I kinda was." Turning around to face them, I see a brunette, about my height standing in the cold with a large jumper and mittens on. She seems exactly like the girl from my dream, only dressed completely differently. The resemblance is freakish though it's the first time I've heard her speak, dream or not.

When I get over that shock, a thought comes to me. "Did you just come out?"

"Huh? Why?"

"Well, it started snowing just a while ago. You looked dressed for the weather." She smiles.

"Fancy yourself a detective?" She laughs "You're right, I came out to meet someone from the station,"

"Oh, I see."

She's talked with me for a lot longer than I had expected and doesn't seem bothered that I'm clearly not supposed to be here. Maybe she's bored or maybe I just look that helpless right now. I tell her about the delays which doesn't surprise her despite her coming all this way to get someone - she must be used to it.

I decide to walk with her because I've got nothing better to do and she was expecting company anyway. She calls the person she was expecting – from what I can tell, her father – and he confirms that he'll be staying elsewhere because of the delay and finish the journey tomorrow. Thing is, barely anything but the train can take you between this stop and the last simply because of the weird development in the area. It's the reason why the station dominates the visual impact of the town and why barely anyone actually lives here.

Still, I get the appeal since although I always end up here on accident, I still enjoy it. It's almost a blessing that the snow has made movement in or out so difficult because I honestly prefer this tiny town to back home.

The girl gets off the phone and it occurs to me that I don't even know her name yet. It actually feels quite nice just walking with her despite being basically strangers. Maybe not strangers since I met her in a dream. Sort of. To be honest, I took it as some premonition or something, like I was being told to find her or whatever. I know, it's stupid, but I started writing down my dreams because I had a dream I just ignored that came true. What harm could it do to be on the safe side?

We stop again right outside the station and it seems like something just occurred to her. "Oh... um... What are you meant to be doing?" She asks

"You mean now?"
"Were you meant to be staying here somewhere? You've just been wandering around with me so far,"
"Yeah, I missed my stop." She's taken aback by the casual nature of that comment. Now that I think about it, I won't be able to leave here until tomorrow and I hadn't even thought about what I'm going to do before I can get back on a train. "Do your parents know?"
"I don't really care." It's not that deep but she puts a lot of thought into her response. "You should tell them anyway."

I feel bad about being so carefree about everything now. The thought of what I was going to do next hadn't crossed my mind once. I guess I've just gotten into some bad habits. After a moment of composing myself, I start thinking about what I should do next. One thing comes to mind... "What's your name, by the way?"

"Amelia,"
"Theo."

Amelia smiles to herself and turns away. I've dragged her into this by mistake but she doesn't seem like the type to let it go now. I tell her not to worry about me and that I'll work it out but honestly I have no hope at all of getting any better accommodation than a cardboard box on the street without her.

After she decides to help me somehow, I buy Amelia a drink and a packet of crisps from one of the smaller cafés still open as an unspoken token of gratitude. There's a queue from people who can't wait in the station but it's not too long and I need to prove to myself that I'm not a complete waste of time for her.

We keep walking as we eat and talk, which makes me like her even more. The more I learn about her, the more she reminds me of someone and I'm not entirely sure why. "Oh, you dropped something," she says suddenly and reaches down to get it. It's my notebook which would normally never fall out of my pocket but must have been loosely placed in it at the station. It surprises me but for some reason, Amelia also takes a second to process it.

She stands back up but still holds onto it, turning it over in her hands as though double checking something. "Thanks," I say to remind her I'm still here.

"Oh, sorry. It's just..."

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out the same notebook. I reach for hers and we both stare in awe at the notebooks. "How strange," she says, flipping over the cover out of curiosity. I'm about to stop it when all of a sudden she snaps it shut again, takes my hand and drags me along at a much quicker pace. I try to think of what she read that would have surprised her so much. The only thing in the first few pages is a note from the person who gave the book to me, Emily.

It was a parting gift because her parents were having arguments and eventually split up so she had to move. At the time, it had made me feel really bad for not getting her anything but it's become really handy and quite important to me. It feels like there isn't so much distance between us when I write in it despite us not talking since she left ages ago. Why would a little note be so surprising?

Before I have time to figure anything out or ask any questions, we stop again, this time right in front of a small house. "What happened to Emily?" Amelia asks, as though finishing a thought aloud

"What?"

"What do you think happened to Emily?"

"Uh... she moved away. We said that we'd still see each other but we've never talked since,"
"I'm really sorry,"

"What? I'm confused. What was all that about?"

"That notebook, Emily gave me one too,"

"You knew her too?"
"I knew her too,"

"Can you just explain everything?" She exhales, as if she had hoped she wouldn't have to.

"Emily moved because her parents split. She and her father found a new home here and we met. It became more and more obvious that they were really unhappy here every day, with her father becoming less pleasant too. One day at school, Emily gave me this notebook out of nowhere with an odd note inside. I thought she might have just worded it strangely but..." She pauses, thinking deeply about how to tell me the rest. "She stopped showing up to school. Eventually, I decided to just check for myself how she was but she'd gone missing and hadn't been seen anywhere for weeks. They couldn't do a proper search because of how many people pass through here on the way to work and by the time any action at all was taken, it was a lost cause. Most people thought the most anyone would find was a body,"

"That's not funny,"

"I wouldn't joke about something like that."

I can tell that she's serious but I still can't simply accept something like that. How could that be the case? Why would she make a promise to see me knowing she couldn't keep it? Emily wouldn't, she just wouldn't. There's no anger or sadness in me because there's no chance a word she just said is true. She gave me a notebook, why would she give someone she barely knew the same thing? Did she not care about me at all?

"Stop lying," I say in monotone

"Theo, please." Hearing her say my name makes me feel ill. The distance is gone, I am being told this, not watching it from afar. "I would have been told," "There was no official statement. No real coverage at all on the news,"

"Why? That doesn't make any sense,"

"There was no proper search and no one wanted to rule out either possibility,"

"..."

"This was her house, and they've left the bedroom untouched as like a memorial or something,"

"..."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know how much she meant to you. I-"

I can't accept something like that from just hearing about it. Normally, I'd just be able to ignore a story like that but after spending some time with Amelia she doesn't seem like the type of person to lie like that and if she had gone missing, it would explain why I've never heard from her since. I hear a creaking noise and see that the door is slightly open. Without thinking, I walk up to it and pull it the rest of the way open, letting the warm air hit me before I step inside. I look around for a bedroom whilst ignoring Amelia's pleas to stop. If

she wasn't lying then I need to see it with my own eyes. Something inside me feels like it fell through the floor when I see the name 'Emily' on a small sticker on one of the doors upstairs. But I muster what courage I have left to open the door and the rest of my feeling goes.

The room is mostly untouched like Amelia said, with her bed, posters and furniture all unmoved. However, on the bed is a framed picture of Emily with messages written on the frame from many different people in different colours. I read a few, all about hoping she'll come back or something similar but my vision becomes too blurred to keep going.

The door opens again and Amelia comes in slowly. She stands by the door silently, waiting for something to happen. "I feel so stupid now," I say, my voice breaking

"It's okay,"

"No, I was chasing a dream. I was trying to find her. Even today, I came looking without even realising,"

"I'm sorry you had to find out like this,"

"There isn't a good way to find out you've been wasting your time. I should have stopped looking a long time ago. I stopped caring about other things because I was so focused on holding on to my best friend. She left a long time ago."

Amelia opens the notebook and starts reading. "'I had seen it all happen but I didn't even try to help her'..." she flips through the notebook and finds today's entry "'I saw a girl I've never seen before. Nothing happened but it seemed important. Perhaps I'll meet her soon?'"

"Yeah, I wanted to stay with you because of a stupid dream. I've been nothing but trouble, haven't I?"

"I didn't have a dream like that. I just met you and wanted to help," "That makes me look even worse." She laughs which cheers me up a lot. "Dreams don't predict the future," she says. We go back outside where it has finally stopped snowing. There is still a lot of snow but the visibility has improved. Some of the snow has started to melt, the water running along the pavement like tiny rivers.

"I think you just put it together things weren't alright at home. I doubt that you were the only one to realise and I know that it wasn't your responsibility to help."

"Then what about the dream with the girl?"

"I think you saw what you wanted and needed to see. You've come all this way for a friend and you made yourself find one,"

"But why would you do all this for me if it's not your responsibility?"

"You seemed a lot like me and I needed a friend too,"

We keep walking along, taking scenic routes. Though we're silent, there's no awkwardness in the air. I buy her another drink because I've been a pain to her even though she would never admit it.

"I feel bad to have relied on practically a stranger so much," I say as we come to a small stone bridge. A river runs just below it very slowly. It reminds me of the children I saw playing games in the station. It's such a nice area I'm sure many people have passed through, including probably Emily too. Strangely, it's knowing that Amelia is like me and that there was some similarities between the people Emily gave those notebooks to is what makes me most relieved. I needed to know that she gave me it for a reason and not just some random person she knew.

But through a mutual friend we'll never see again, a random dream and freakish weather, I found a new friend, someone who I connected to in the short time we've known each other already. I know I'll keep seeing Amelia because I need to repay the favour she's done me and because I need her to keep moving on myself.

But she was right, I should probably tell my parents what's going on. I text my mum 'I'm staying at a friend's tonight. Promise I won't miss my stop again'. Amelia seems glad. We trade back our notebooks and I flip back through it, reading all the ridiculous dreams I've had and analysed to death before I shut it closed and toss it into the river. The paper wrinkles and starts breaking, turning up at the edges. Wordless, Amelia takes her notebook and casts it out too, the two black rectangles bobbing up and down next to each other as they float downstream.

Goodbye Emily.

Adam Perry

Haseltine Primary School

Night

everyday that I wake up
I stare into a
nightmare

everyday that I wake up
I can never see
quite clear

everyday a black panther
nothing else, only
growling

I do what I love, hoping
that you will love me
always

a ghost floating in the air
I don't feel any
thing, numb

wake up in my surroundings
but still everyone
doubts me

Calais McNamee (Y6 Haseltine)

Nightmares and Dreams

I sit up in bed, eyes wide open
A dry throat, shaking and trembling with fear
Surrounding myself with the duvet, legs tingling
Don't want to move, heart beating loud and fast

Flustered and panicking in the darkness
The shadows are frightening
Something watches me
Pull my feet into the duvet
Look down under the bed
Two bright green eyes staring back at me
I scream
Nothing

Pull the duvet up to my neck
Eyes begin to shut, drifting off on an adventure
Like a cloud, excited for where I could go
Stretching to see flowers in a field
Fragrant, like candy-floss
So relaxed, surrounded by soft white feathers
A flock of birds beside me
Then slowly falling to the ground
Feel the breeze flowing through the grass
Leaves on the trees swaying back and forth
Sunshine warms my face and body
Happy and safe
Animals roaming in the forest, just like me
Then lifted, and wake up
Refreshed and free

Lily Thirkettle (Y6 Haseltine)

Follow your dreams

Follow my dreams they said,
But do they know that's what I dread?
They just don't understand that,
Life isn't all triumph and love and happiness

Follow my dreams they said,
You are clearly not sane!
Whoever wants to follow,
Ear-piercing screams and bodies in flames,
Blood on the floor and sharp stabbing pain?

Follow my dreams they said,
Why, such a ridiculous phrase!
Get in to your head that this world
that we live in is not such a fantasy.
Dreams can come true, they can certainly
But nightmares are dreams too.

Mehri Kabilova (Y6 Haseltine)

Missing

Josiah is an 11-year-old boy and the oldest of four children. His mother is a widow as his father died in a freak accident whilst working away from home. His father had been an aerospace engineer and his mother didn't work: his father had been their sole provider. Josiah's mum does not have much money. Whatever she does have, goes on bills with little left for food and clothes. Josiah's mum is struggling to keep the only home they've known.

Every morning and night Josiah promises his mum that it will get better, but he can see the pain in her eyes as she feels she has failed them.

Each night Josiah would look out the window to see his father's star and pray that a miracle would happen for them and every night Josiah dreamed of them having a better life.

Josiah went for a walk by the lake near his home, he fed the ducks - as he and his dad had done every weekend. This was their sacred place. While walking home, he saw a fragile object washed up by the river and his curiosity got the better of him so he picked it up. He saw it was an old brown stone after

taking off the dirt and it had carvings on it, the carvings looked like something he had seen in the museum. The object looked like it was important, but why was it out here in the river? Josiah took it home but his mum was too busy to listen. He looked on his dad's computer and did some research. Josiah discovered that this was an ancient relic from the late 1600s and was possibly very valuable and this could change his family's life forever!

The following day, Josiah's mother went to the museum to get the artefact assessed and was told that they could sell this for them for a considerable amount of money or keep it and get no money. As she heard how much this missing artefact was worth, her heart was in her throat as she dropped to the ground with tears. Josiah knew that God would one day hear his prayers and make his dreams come true.

Then he woke up.....

By Nyla Gayle (Haseltine Y6)

What is a dream?

A dream is a thought it happens when you are asleep.

Although it feel like it is in reality it is not for example.

Example

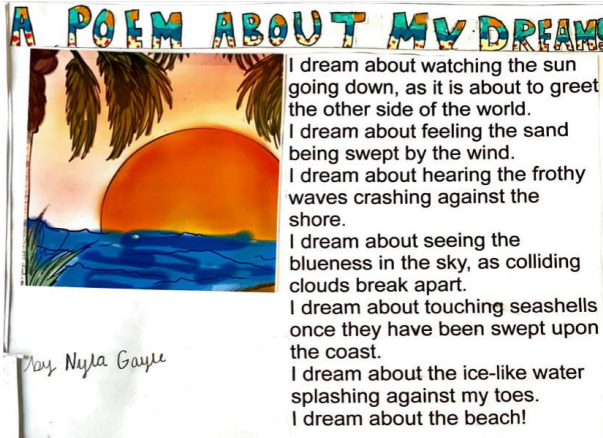
I dreamt about walking in Stratford and I found a fifty pound note lying on the ground. It made me feel like I was the luckiest person in the world.

What is a nightmare?

A nightmare is the opposite to a dream it is a fear that comes to life in your dream for example.

Example

I was watching the tv and a black figure came out of it, It felt like my heart in my throat.



In the sky

It's a dark dream so can't run away,
Storm clouds all around so I don't feel ok
Don't understand why I have to be sad
I guess it's just life

Looking around I'm all alone
Where is my family? I want to go home,
I am on a cloud sitting down heartbroken you see,
Running from my past so I can be free,

This man tries to give me bruise
But I dodge it with my cool moves
I tense to jump away but my feet won't move,
Close my eyes and I start to pray

Hoping god will help me today
The guy goes right through me and I know I'm a ghost
Now I know that god is the host he is the one I care about most
So, now I sit on this grey cloud hoping the sun will come out

Boom I wake up mum is standing near
I sit up and say hi mother dear

You wouldn't believe the dream I had
Now that's its over I'm so glad

Omari Johnson (Haseltine Y6)

Dreams/nightmares writing task (draft 1)

I lay down in my bed, twisting and turning in my thick blanket. We fight against the evil spirit. My alarm startles me, I realise it was just a dream. I sit up, trying to identify the blurry objects in the dark room. I climb out of bed, walk across the creaky floorboards and down some rickety stairs. As I walk across the corridor, I hear a strange noise coming from down in the basement. I run back upstairs and rush back to my room, locking the door behind me. Faintly I hear my mum screaming but I can't identify what she's saying. Stunned, I fall to the floor. Fierce rain penetrates through the cracks in my wood ceiling. The howling wind rattles the window panes in the bitter, damp night.

My head spins as if there's a tornado living inside me. I can still hear my mum screaming down stairs, I feel guilty, I can't save her. I peer through the key hole of my door. Speechless. A sable figure slowly moves closer to me. The fear that consumes me is like hell, burning in my mind. Poking my head round the side of the door frame, I turn the door handle. My consciousness tells me to shut the door. As I get to the window, the sable creature stares at me. Silence. I shut the blind, run down stairs, and bang on the basement door. I can't hear anything, my heart pumps rapidly. What has just happened? My mum is gone, forever.

"I am every nightmare you've ever had, I am your worst dream come true," said a low whisper coming from the distance. As the creature moves towards me I stand still staring into its cardinal eyes. It stops. Screaming, I wake up, breathing heavily. My heart pumps swiftly. It's just a dream. My mum comes in my room, she's fine. I felt like I had the fight the devil sitting on my shoulder.

Savannah Elliott (Y6 Haseltine)

SCREAM

THUD!

I sit up in bed, sweat pouring from my face. Wiping it away with one hand, I hug my teddy tight with the other. I stroke its soft ears as my rapid heartbeat slows. I get up from bed and walk towards the door.

Trying to reassure myself, I mutter 'It's probably dad.' Gathering all my courage, I reach for the door knob, my hand shaking as I twist it. Nothing.

THUD!

My heart skips a beat as I realise where the sound is coming from. I twist my head towards the closet door and....SCREAM but there's no sound.

A giant man with a dark cloak wrapped around him, stares straight at me, clutching the biggest carving knife in the kitchen. I immediately realise he is chewing on something. With horror, I notice it is glass. I stare at the window; half of it is missing. My teddy slips out of my hands as my heart stops.

I wake up with a gasp, thankful it was all a dream.

THUD!

My eyes bulge out of my sockets as I turn to the window. A man with a sinister smile mouths, "Open the window. Don't scream and I won't hurt you...."

Sofia Azimi (6M Haseltine)

Abandoned

Walking at crawling speed, my head felt huge and heavy, every muscle in my body ached. My arms and legs were responding to the signals from my brain more sluggishly than I thought possible. Reaching the front door, I held the handle with a loose grip. The path that required only a second for my eyes to travel took about twenty minutes for my body to cover. Slowly, I gripped the handle in a downward motion, only to realize it barely moved. I gathered my last reserves of strength and pressed it down again. No success. I pivoted around, leaned against the door, and gradually slid to the ground. I felt unsteady, weak and so thirsty that I could barely think about anything else. Desperate to get inside, I had to pull myself together and open the door, otherwise I would pass out at the entrance to my own house. Forcing myself up from the ground, I faced the door again. Closing my eyes for a few seconds, I took a deep breath, opened them, and pulled the doorknob down as hard as I could. It gave way grudgingly.

Seeing the cracked window, and smelling lemon air freshener, I realized it was my old house. By the time my eyes adapted to the darkness inside, I could

tell that no one was around. What time was it? Where was everyone? The deafening silence pierced my ears; it was unnatural. There was no sound coming from the working fridge or ticking clock. Nothing. Stumbling to the kitchen for some water, I turned on the tap and put an empty glass under it. Nothing. My small world had become ravished by emptiness, and somehow, I felt forgotten here all alone, left to pass away into the realms of thirst and heat.

Suddenly, a cry emanated from the kitchen bin. Upon opening the lid, I made out a furry bundle, purring. It was a lion cub! Picking it up, and looking into its eyes, we relished an exceedingly warm cuddle.

My eyes recoiled from a stream of brightness. I awoke in my bed, my brain feeling shot through, every thought in high definition. Looking down at my chest, I noticed that I was hugging my pillow tightly. The noises of day were in full swing.

Kene Igweonu (Haseltine 6M)

Personal Language Histories

AJ's Language Timeline

TASK: Can you come up with a list of 10 things in your language life that are important to you and rate them in importance?

Made you feel embarrassed?

Yes when teachers mimic me because of how i pronounce certain words.. For example when i say water i am often corrected and told to pronounce it correctly.

Made you laugh?

Yes because when i mispronounce something and i find it funny.

Made you angry?

When i hear people say horrible things to each other that makes me very angry.

Made you able to do something you haven't done before?

Yes when i learnt to speak French at school. When i have struggled to do something i have been able to learn through speaking and asking questions.

Made you happy?

I felt happy when i have been told good news like when my auntie finished chemo and got the all clear from her doctor.

Made you feel hurt?

I have felt hurt when people have said horrible things to me. I am hurt by adults who correct me when I pronounce certain words especially when the teacher does it in front of other people and thinks it's funny. When they do this it makes me hurt because they make it sound like i am not smart or educated enough. This isn't correct i choose to pronounce words how i feel comfortable.

Made you feel like you belonged?

Yes when i have a game of football and we use different vocabulary such as man on, meaning keep hold of the ball, or in the box meaning get ready to get the ball near the goal.

Made you feel left out?

I have felt left out when i have heard people talking in a different language and i can't communicate with them. When i don't understand what people are talking about and can't speak about the something

Made you feel proud?

I feel proud of my voice because it is different to every one else and i speak how i like.

Allowed you to understand something you hadn't before?

Yes because when i dont understand a word or a phrase i can use language to communicate and find out a meaning or an answer.

Aj PeRsOnAl LaNgUaGe HiStOrY

My early years...

When I was younger my mum used to say I was a very vocal baby, as soon as I could make gurgles or cooing noises I did. Even though I couldn't speak proper words my mum said that I would always respond to her when she spoke to me. I would make lots of noises and pull faces at her.

My mum said that I said my first proper word at about 6months old which was mama. After this my mum said I haven't stopped talking.

It took me longer to learn how to pronounce certain words like:
Turquoise I used to say turkeywise,
After shave I used to say attershave,
A few other words that couldn't say were yellow, submarine and squirrel.
I can now pronounce all these words.

I speak English, myself and most of my family live in the south east area of London which means we all speak and sound the same. My auntie Sam lives in a different part of the country where they pronounce all of their words properly, they make sure they pronounce all their vowels and constantans. They say their words the way the way they are supposed to be said. I think this makes them sound very posh sometimes.

When I speak to different people I use different language, for example if I'm speaking to my Uncle Dave I use slang and he understands me. When I speak in slang to my niece Niamh she doesn't understand me so I use the correct words and pronunciations.

I have lots of different ways that I communicate some of the ways I communicate with people are:

Eyes – I roll them when I'm annoyed or disagree

Hands – I wave when I don't want to speak or I put my thumbs up. Sometimes i don't want to speak and use my hands instead, we were taught sign language at school and i still sometimes use sign language.

Facial expressions- I smile to show I'm happy and frown when I'm angry. I say walter instead of water

Sayings my family and I use:

What a palava- meaning what a mess/ confusion. My mum uses this when she makes a mistake.

Houston, we have a problem- meaning we have a problem. We use this when something goes wrong.

I am cream crackered- meaning I am tired. We say this when we are very tired after a long day.

Take your time love- meaning hurry up we haven't got all day. My mum and I say this to each when we are being sarcastic to each other or when one of us is taking their time.

Nice to see you, to see you nice- my Granddad always says this to me, its not really a saying but it always makes me smile when my Granddad says it.

Other languages that I am able to communicate in

At Primary school I learnt some French. I can only remember a small amount of French. I can say Hello my name is AJ and i am 11 years old:
Bonjour mon nom est AJ et j'ai 11 ans.

I hoped you enjoyed my language history

Kene's Personal Language History

Apart from being born 5 days early, I was much ahead of my parent's friend's children who are the same age as myself in terms of developmental milestone, according to my mum. For example, I started speaking around 7 months, my mum usually says, "You started talking when you were in the womb." My first word was: Daddy. Most of my first words were in Igbo language, which is my mother-tongue.

Sayings commonly used in my family

1. Obedience is better than sacrifice.
2. Make hay while the sun shines.
3. Opportunity comes but once.
4. A stitch in time saves nine.
5. How you make your bed so you shall lie on it.
6. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
7. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.
8. A journey of a thousand miles starts with a step.

1. Nrube isi di mma karja aja.
2. Mee ahihia mgbe anwu na-acha.
3. Ohere na-abia ma otu mgbe.
4. Akwa nwere oge ga-azoputa mmadu iteghete.
5. Otu i si edozi akwa gi ka i gha dinakwa n'elu ya.
6. Onunon na-eme ka obi too mmadu elu.
7. Ine yinye siri ike dika njiko ya adighi ike.
8. Njem puku kilomita na-amalite site na nzoukwu.

Words I know in Igbo

1. Ozugo – It's enough; Ekwerom – I don't agree
-

2. Aja – Sand; Rapu ya aka – Leave him/ her alone
3. Akara – Bean cake; Chineke – God
4. Amam – I know; Ewoo - Expressing Sympathy/ exclamation
5. Azu – Fish; Mba - No; Ndo – Sorry; Nwoke – Man Nwanyi- Woman;
6. Biko – Please
7. Bunie ya enu – Lift him/ her high up

Milad's Personal Language History

Sorry it so late but here is my plh

چون عاقبت الامر به مقصود رسیدند

رفتند در آن خانه که بینند خدا را

بسیار بجزستند خدا را و ندیدند

چون معتكف خانه شدند از سر تکلیف

نا گاه خطابی هم از آن خانه شنیدند

که ای خانه پرستان چه پرستان چه پرستید گل و سنگ

آن خانه پرستید که پاکان طلبیدند

Milad

آنان که به سر در طلب کعبه دویدند

Those who ran to seek the
Kaaba
Because they finally achieved
their goal
They went to the house to see
God
They worshiped God a lot and
did not see Him
Because they became
homeless because of
homework
Suddenly they heard a speech
from that house
O house-worshippers, whether
worshippers or worshipers of
mud and stone
Worship the house that they
purified Milad

Loxford School

One

A unity that strikes through everyone's soul
Society where we could do things as one.
A collision of peace and freedom
merging at one's pure sight.
What could one more imagine?
A world where nation cannot divide us
nor race.
We are made by the same flesh.
And where infliction is non-existent to us
Where war is needless, only damaging our world.
And us.
You could hear the sorrowed cry
Of our planet, pain living inside for eternity.
A swollen abyss.
This could all change.
Time is near, so is our future.
A future where we are one.

Mohamed Zergouat

Things I See

I see humans,
but no humanity.
I see murder,
but no justice.
I see violence,
and always tolerance.
I see racism,
but no justice.

I imagined the world in a different way,
the one I see is brainwashed in a misleading way.
The false assumptions that the world has created
People feeling they need to fight for their right
the road that has also taken innocent black lives.
Alive from the outside
but dead from the inside
this racist world
refusing to change
The past is the past,
with those who sacrificed their lives
for better future rights,
but the world is still the same, the same racist way.
It's never too late to follow the right path,
This we must do, keeping humanity still alive.

Saira Naseem

Asylum?

Don't stare at my grave and weep.
I'm not there, I feel death not sleep.
Screaming with monster delight
People running in terror and
fright

Don't stand up on me and cry
That's my grave but I
don't die

AHAHAHAHA

These nightmares crawl in my bed
Living devouring my head.
Terror buried deep down
Coming fearfully, around.

Hamzah Adil

Stock-Exchange

Hold far to dream
For it dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly
Never give up, never lose hope
Always have faith, it allows you to cope.

Diamonds lie that ripped apart
Shard of truth, a pain of glass
A silver thread upon the ground
A web of lies that can not be found.
They give you back your twisted dream
What they do, this I tell:
Your dream in exchange for a nightmare is what you sell.

Tabasum Osma

My Dreamscape

Closed my eyes. Shut my mouth. Heard a ring. Caught a sound.

Finally, deep asleep. The night deadly silent
Lost and covered in the rainbow,
candyfloss clouds. They drift me away to an unknown place.
Touching the soft

fluffiness of their humongousness, I could feel the stickiness of a flavoured rainbow coming towards me. I woke up! At first, everything was blurry, colours merging into each other. Where am I? I wandered around in confusion. I took a bite of the sugary rainbow and took a huge slide down. Wow! What a weird place it was, a place called... My own imagination! The majestic animals, invented candies, a slideshow of my childhood memories. It was such a sweet dream, the land was filled with colour, happiness and joy! I felt like I was trapped inside a wild dimension, loaded with positive thoughts and never-ending fun. It turns out that everything's just made out of desserts and candies.

I know what you must be thinking – you've never heard a unique description such as this before, with so much colour. Let me take you to this mysterious world – a world full of my goals, achievements and dreams. Full of cosmic skies, there won't be a single rainy day because the sky will only be galactic and starry. The dark night will be bright as it's filled with planets and galaxies you could never imagine. You could do anything you want in this world. Concentrate on something that pops in your head and it will come to life!

But beware, the Dream Catcher... If you don't catch any good dreams, this place can quickly become a horrifying nightmare. When the dream clock strikes 3 in the morning, the magic will stop and you'll have a jolting nightmare that'll make you jump in fright. Collecting your dreams isn't that easy, cause you're running out of time...

Saeeda Choudhury

Woodside High School and St. Thomas More RC School

The following collection of poems are from a group of dedicated, inspirational and creative students based in warm and vibrant schools in North London. These students have written vividly about Dreams and Nightmares from figments of the imagination to vivid responses to global events. I have no doubt that these young writers will go on to achieve greatness and will lead their generation through social commentary and transform the lives and minds of others through the power of poetry.

Childhood Nightmare

She used to believe in monsters
That dwell under your bed
Patiently waiting
And emerging in the night.

With angular sharp features
And red, lifeless eyes
That are tall and slender
With sunken faces.

She used to have nightmares
Of those creatures in the shadows
But those stopped years ago
She has other things to worry about.

A month ago, she granted herself
Just six hours of sleep
Last night it was three
Anxiety had kept her awake.

A small bite was all she needed
A glass of water accompanied that
The sick, empty feeling was familiar
She wouldn't dare to eat more than that.

She had failed every exam,
But her parents weren't there to notice
They were somewhere else
Nobody was there to care.

She cried and sobbed and heaved
Each breath was agony
Her feeble body couldn't it take any longer
Eventually she tried to stand.

She couldn't think,
She felt dizzy
Her head hurt
The world was spinning.

Her legs felt weak,
They gave way
She fell
And struck her head.

When they found her,
They weren't sure what she was
They found a tall, slender creature
With red, lifeless eyes
And angular, sharp features
Along with a sunken face
Every bone sticking out.

Although she might not have noticed,
While in the grasp of her inner demons
She had wasted away
Until she resembled her childhood nightmare.

Nela Kasiak

Spectate

In dreams we have no control,
We just spectate,
Observe it all unfold.

We aren't to blame
Our brain just creates a story,
It might horrify or delight.

But here,
I am in control.
Aren't I?

The crimson
On my arms and the blade
That's my doing.

I have no control,
I just spectate,
Observe it all unfold.

Nela Kasiak

Sleep paralysis

It waits,
In the darkest corner
It smiles,
An unnerving grin
It walks,
Towards my bed.

I can't move
Not even a finger
I feel, weight on my chest
I see, the creature of my nightmares

I try to scream...
But I can't do anything.

I'm helpless.

Nela Kasiak

(1)

Will I ever wake from this dream?
I want to see
What life would be like without these pains,
Without these restraints
Would I still be a slave?
With no pay,
With no way to know anything but pain
Can I fight those oppressors?
Stop these oppressors
for all the people who have lost their voice,
Who have no choice.
Will I ever wake from this dream...

Genabou Boiro

II
This place is nice
This place is silent
Green meadows for miles
The sun that smiles
There's no-one here
Everything is clear
But the silence is thick,
and the niceness makes me feel sick
The meadows shrink
The smile sinks
Doubt creeps
Darkness seeps
This place was nice.

Genabou Boiro

When will I wake?

Fire blazes,
People are running, screaming as they're sprayed with mace.

The sound of a blazing siren,
Some people stand still, scared.
Like they've seen a lion.

People run past me but their faces are covered.

I knew there was no trouble,
I was having a nightmare.
The alarm clock woke me up and I could see my Mum's judgemental stare.

I waited wondering how my brain could come up with this,
Unthinkable mess.

Police throwing pepper spray bombs into crowds of unsuspecting citizens,
People standing still. It's clear they have discipline.

I was pushed by a crowd,
They were still chanting loud.

This doesn't feel like a dream,
The cops firing rubber bullets, more and more.

I fell behind the crowd,
I knew everyone was getting more wild.

I got hit.
I screamed asking a question I knew would never be answered.

When will this nightmare be over?

Genabou Boiro

The Repeating Dream

This dream keeps repeating,
My happiness fleeting,
I just want it to go away.

I don't think I want to sleep anymore,
I don't even want to blink.
I'm scared to close my eyes,
I'm scared that I'll fall asleep.

Now that it's too late,
I enter the dream domain,
A picture without a frame,
I don't know my fate,
So courage I have to feign.

There's a monster in the corner,
Ready to pounce and flounce.
"HELP ME!"
I try to pronounce,
But the words just won't come out.

E.I

As Your Heart Sinks

You look around,
All you see are people you don't know,
You begin to frown,
You feel a gentle blow,
You try to calm down,
But all your anxieties are surrounding your brain,
Where am I?
Who am I?
Clueless of your surroundings,
You look off the edge of this moving object,
Water, water, water,

Suddenly you detect something incorrect,
The tide came in on children's laughter,
After the ship was half and half,
You could hear a faint calling,
No one began to laugh,
No one was celebrating,
As all the smiles dropped,
As all the people screamed,
None of this began to stop,
Could this be the end?

Angelina Theodorou

I can't Breathe!

I can't breathe, I can't breathe.
Please stop, please stop.
Is there anyone who could help me?
I am a human like you.
Please stop, please stop.
Can't you see me.
Can't you see me.
Every life matters.

Ideal Ozgul

Night Angel

Last night I dreamt an angel
He was so tall like a giraffe
He was on the top of a mountain.
Night becomes brighter than the sunniest day that ever shone
Your smile grows better in happy dreams
A bunch of teeth grinning like a team
Fly high like a kite
As the sky goes grey as if turning to dawn
A peaceful wind swayed as sharp as a thorn.

Junior Conteh

American Black Life

I was born into a black life,
Judged for every little thing,
Police would stop me and think,
Knife crime is because of people like me.
I am very paranoid,
When roaming the streets,
I'm aware that there are people,
Who hate black citizens like me...
I read the news,
In shock and disbelief,
When hearing innocent people have been killed
Because of their colour or beliefs.
When will there be change?
People treated equally,
This is an outrage!
We are all the same species.
BLACK LIVES MATTER!

Sumaya Adam

The World In My Eyes.

Life.
It's a beautiful yet disastrous thing
It could make or break you
With just the slightest detour.

There are the sinners
The ones that take away lives
for petty excuses
that will never add up.
There are the ones who thrive from making you miserable
The ones that have nothing better to do
then laugh at your pains
or beam at your sorrows.

There are the people who are pushed to the edge
driven mad with grief and guilt
so they would hide their despair away
or end it all to stop their suffering.

People would succumb to evil so quick
that little girls and boys would be torn
from their families
and lose their innocence.

Others can't stand the thought of being here with a certain 'type' of person.
Like there is a definition of a perfect person,
We all are human
Yet we all spread hate.

There is always hope,
a small light
and if only we all saw it, we could follow it
Away from the world in my eyes.

Rhea Mehta

My Dream Turned Into A Reality

Being a lawyer is truly a tough profession,
Fighting tough battles when court is in session,
Fighting for the rights of the innocent and needy,
Justice against the corporate giants that are greedy,

Lawyers are the knights in amour in the concrete jungle today,
Collectively keeping the balance of law in check every day,
One day I do hope that this will be me, a young girl speaking out honestly.
Changing the globe into a better place,
I see the faces of those who I love, chanting my name from clouds above,
With practical applications of abstract legal theories as a skill,
To deliver fitting punishments to criminals who steal and kill.

They balance the legal system, they also prevent over punishment,
They line the strongest defence of every establishment,
Analytical skills and critical thinking to defend clients,
Proficiency in legal research and writing to take down giants.

High legal ethics and such deep knowledge of the law,
With such skills fair and just contracts they will draw,
They keep businesses going, they throw murderers in jail,
They keep criminals in check so good will prevail.

Madiha Iman Ahmed

The Monster In My House

I see myself on the bottom floor
Going upstairs to sleep in my room,
Before I touch the stairs I see a mysterious figure,
Walking towards me. I panic
And run for the stairs
I try and go faster.

But it doesn't work,
I was at the same speed in which,
the monster could catch me
Any second now.
Then I stopped, without processing
the information from my brain to my body.

I try to move... It won't work
I panic as the monster comes closer
And closer, and closer
Boom boom boom boom with each foot step.
Suddenly...I wake up and then after a few
Hours, I forget everything that ever happened.

Weird right? That's how dreams go I guess.

Cem Degirmenci

The Train Tracks

The Journey started
When I got on the train and sat down.
Clickety click! Clickety clack!
As we all fell back!
Oh no the train's crashed!
But now, we had to find
A way out...

Alica McMahon Chapman

Have you?

Have you ever stopped to ask your son if he is okay?
Have you ever stopped to comfort your daughter?
You know, my generation are always doing things for a reason.
Some Black Kings believe the streets is for them.
You know why they think that?
No one told them "you're going to make it in life"
Or even a simple "I love you".
Their father may not be in their life to show them how to be a man,
Their mother may not be in their life to teach them how to respect women.
The pressure of school may be too much for them to handle,
Going back and forth from their Mum's to Dad's house
Trying out for a team they didn't make,
Being told they weren't "good enough".
And so, they search for something to do, to earn money and support their
guardians
And they end up being labelled as 'thugs'
Thinking that it is cool and easy
Or are they just acting on learnt behaviour?

Yasmin Young-Clarke

Cold Feet

Walking slowly,
freezing with every step
chills travelling down my spine
frostbite catching up to me.
Bolting up,
my heart racing fast
I turn around, making sure this is real.
It was just another dream,
it was just another nightmare.

Zoe Casey

Teachers as Writers' work

Adam Croxford

Cherries

I had a dream the other night.
The cherries on the tree in my garden were turning red.
My wife told me they would not be ripe.
I ate them anyway.
She is always right.

Personal Language History.

*Sh*t*

Shit wasn't the first word I said, but it was the first word I wrote in a birthday card to my mother. I have a vague memory of this, but my older sister tells me that I was left alone to write my part of a card to my mother and randomly wrote the word 'sh*t' without any idea of its meaning.

Retired

I was very young when I was staying with my grandparents and my grandfather asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I replied that I wanted to be like him – when questioned further I revealed that apparently, I wanted to be 'retired'. Thinking back, he must have made being retired seem quite alluring for a three-year-old to want to be it.

Yeah, but what if

This phrase frustrated my brother. He is about a year older than me and I can recall asking him a lot of questions. His answers never seemed to satisfy my however, and I would force him to amend his answers with a never-ending torrent of 'yeah but what if', until he tired of this and hit me.

Turning blue

When I was very young and didn't have the language to deal with situations that frustrated me, or simply when I wanted to frustrate my parents (according to my mother), I would hold my breath. This would lead me to turn blue and my parents were so worried that they took me to the doctor who told them to slap me on the back.

Cancer

Cancer is a word that I knew before I knew what it meant. My father was diagnosed with cancer a few months before I was born. My mother, who lost her own mother to cancer, wanted to make sure that her children were aware of what was going on so we would be better able to deal with the time when my father died. It makes me angry, sad and envious all at the same time.

Blackheath/common

I grew up in Blackheath, which I thought was the best place in the world. It would cause me great annoyance when people referred to 'the heath' as a common. I'm not sure why this was. I think, rather than the word common being the problem, it was the idea that someone was calling something that I felt was part of my identity by a different name. It was almost as if they were calling me by a different name.

Daydreaming

My early primary school reports were full of this word. Teachers complained consistently that I was too busy 'daydreaming' to do any work. When my parents asked me what was going on I told my mother that she had taught me to think.

To R.P. or not to R.P.

As I grew older, my way of speaking changed. Having been educated at an all-boys private school and grown up with a family who spoke in the dialect of the professional middle class, I had led a relative sheltered linguistic childhood, with little exposure to the regional accent and dialect of my home. My parent wanted me to speak in received pronunciation, or a close variant of this, and as my brother and I explore our surroundings more independently we began to pick up the accent of South East London. This led to being corrected constantly at the dinner table.

Butter

One particular bone of contention was our pronunciation of 'butter', which they were determined to have pronounced correctly. Yesterday and Saturday

were also trigger word. Thinking back, my brother and I were just trying to find our own identity and independence from our parents and our accent changes were a form of us expressing ourselves. I think my parents were worried that the way we were using language would perhaps affect the way we thought, although writing that makes me think that cannot be the reason. My parents were too openminded for that, but accent was the cause of friction in our household.

Clem

At my father's funeral, his best friend from school told me that my father would be ashamed of how I spoke English. This had a profound impact on me and led me to try and speak in an accent closer to the one of which I imagined my father would have approved. This meant I began to speak an accent closer to received pronunciation. I think accent can be important. We live in an unfair world where you are often judged not on what you say, but on how you say it, and I think that speaking with an accent slightly closer to RP has possibly been helpful in certain situations.

Magwitch

During my rebellious teens I had my head shaved. When I went into school, my English teacher and form tutor asked me why I had had my hair cut like Magwitch. I did not answer but went back and re-read the parts of *Great Expectations* in which he featured. Later in the same term I wrote a long essay on his character for which I received a formal commendation from my school.

Nausea, Metamorphosis, The Stranger – Sartre, Kafka, Camus

The allure of the authors with their foreign sounding names and striking book titles appealed to me greatly. I read these and many similar books in a short period of time without knowing what they were about or what to expect from them. This had a profound impact on my and led to my next word.

Philosophy

Philosophy was a great release for me and was the first subject in which I had been truly successful. It was a place for my 'but what if' but also taught me how to think critically and apply the thoughts I had analytically in writing. I would not swap my philosophy education for any other subject.

Hannah Cotter

Thoughts on Freud

Is the Id all it says it is?
The underlying bubble and fizz
The building blocks from which we start
The darkest door within our heart?

That paints us pictures in a dream
That rarely are what they may seem
Just puzzles, codes and secret doors
What's hidden under your floorboards?

Personal Language History

To talk about the history of my language, I must first talk about the absence of language in my life. I hit my milestones later than most children and talking was no exception. I was on target with the 'mumma' and 'dada' alongside my babbles, but it was a while before I said anything with a semblance of coherence.

When I did begin speaking, however, I came out with full sentences. Thinking of language as a means of communication, I suppose I rarely felt there was need for me to do so. I think this comes from the fact that I had an older sister who was very fond of speaking for me, so I didn't need to use words myself. That would explain why my mum only recalls my first phrase other than my first babbles, as 'my do it'. I was two when I said this.

My do it.

From my first sentence, I struggled with differentiating 'my', 'I', and 'mine'. I used to say: 'Mine daddy' and 'Mine mummy'. This carried on for a while, as I remember singing a hymn during school mass ceremonies, '*All that my am, all that my do*'.

H for Hannah

Before I began school, I could write a few letters, and was aware that my name began with an H, so everywhere we went, I would point out the letter H, saying “huh for Hannah”. It’s unsurprising then that when I started learning to write, beginning with writing my name, I wrote a page full of capital H’s. By the end of the first term in reception, I finally learnt to write my name and was praised with a ‘Head Teacher’s Award’ for my efforts. Looking through old workbooks, I can see that I didn’t quite become comfortable with writing until year 2. Year 1 workbooks consisted of words roughly along the line, letters often upside down or backwards, and little to no punctuation or capital letters. Although my work showed a lot of imagination and funny thoughts (like “would they have preferred to go to the chippy instead of going on a bear hunt?”), it wasn’t hugely comprehensible. Past this, my handwriting improved to become extremely neat with appropriate punctuation and very few spelling errors. Though I learnt phonetics, I don’t think they played a massive role in understanding how to spell. Like the rest of my education would turn out to be, spelling was often just educated guessing, yet it was something that I excelled in. I recall that I was far more likely to be able to read a word out loud, or to be able to spell it, than to actually *know* it’s meaning.

Coherence

I was never short of ideas when it came to writing stories. Once something inspired me, I couldn’t be stopped. The only problem was stopping all my seemingly unrelated thoughts from spilling out on the page haphazardly. My ideas are always battling out to see which are more important, and this is no different when it comes to my writing and my story-writing. Similarly, essays were difficult. Being able to redraft ideas before writing them relies heavily on working memory, so I had a tendency to have to get all of the ideas out before organising them once they were eternal.

I found that my ability to write improved once I took on foreign languages. Learning Spanish from year 8 to year 13 really helped me to understand the etymology of words and enhance my vocabulary. Where I previously hadn’t considered the more nuanced aspects of grammar and tenses in language, I was forced to address this when it came to learning a second language. The difference in how sentences were formed made me more aware of how I formed sentences in English, and finding words with similar etymologies in Spanish and English provided helpful as a skill in solving the meaning of unread

words.

Reading

My most poignant memory of reading is trying to stay awake until my dad got home from work when I was meant to be asleep so that he could read me bedtime stories. Usually it was my mum who read to my sisters and me. The book that stuck out to her most was 'Five Minutes Peace', by Jill Murphy (for obvious reasons).

Despite my delayed development in reading, I was always surrounded by books. My sister would read her magic key books to my mum every day – she loved and excelled at reading, and so my mum had prepared for me to be equally as passionate. I loved stories, and I loved being told them and often creating them, but reading wasn't something that came naturally or easily to me. I never struggled too much with pronunciation or expression. In fact, I was such an expressive reader that the trouble was really in the gaps in my vocabulary. I always wanted to read expressively, but sometimes I just didn't know the words yet, which often stopped me in my tracks. I loved reading out loud, I suppose because of the performance aspect. For me, the act of reading and comprehension of reading were two very separate things. Reflecting on this, after 20 years and with a recent ADHD diagnosis, it was probably something to do with how I process language.

I often found alternatives to reading words by figuring out stories by pictures or context. My mind finds it difficult to turn words on a page into a scene at the speed a book often moves at. I have only been able to discover and articulate this recently. The books I distinctly remember reading, and often the books I liked or found easier to read, moved at a slower pace. For example: when I was around 10 years old, I thought that I hated reading. This was until I came across 'A Series of Unfortunate Events' by Lemony Snicket. In this series, the author works through the story slowly, often explaining or contextualising difficult or unusual words. The books that I was often forced to read throughout secondary school began to reinforce, what I thought was, my hatred for reading. Because the grammar school I attended were aware that I was more than capable of reading out loud, and my comprehension levels seemed to be at least average, if not above average, there was no thought given to the fact that I wouldn't complete books or be able to complete work on time. What I saw as a struggle, my teachers fobbed off as laziness. The amount of books I was required to read for school meant that any desire I had to read for pleasure was out of the question. Interestingly, once the very basics were broken down I was able to deeply analyse the words therein, but the initial understanding was something I

struggled

with.

Punctuation & Grammar

Despite slow development in other areas of language, punctuation and grammar were and are a strong point for me. I suppose that, being fond of reading out loud, I have always been aware of how punctuation directs you when reading. Though I don't necessarily use complex punctuation, I have always found it's use extremely important and it has become a priority for me in my writing from a young age. Being a creative person, and working on my creative writing skills for a while, it is often baffling to people that I am particular about punctuation and grammar, but I suppose that my comprehension skills and the way that I learn have had a huge impact on this. I pick up very easily on mistakes.

Anglicisation

On top of punctuation, grammar is something that I became almost obsessive about, not only in written work but in spoken language too. I think that my parents cultural background had a big impact on this. My mother grew up in Dublin, where it was the norm to replace 't' sounds with 'd' sounds (these, those), or drop hard sounds on the end of words (toilet, grandad). There were also common mistakes like using 'we was' instead of we were. My mum went to a catholic school run by nuns where they were taught the 'correct' way to speak. The typical attributes of those from Dublin, that didn't fit received pronunciation, were trained out of them. Because of this my mum was always very aware of any mistakes made by my sisters and I, and I suppose this is something that I learned to be aware of too.

I recall often being mocked for the way I spoke –my parents' accents meant they pronounced certain words differently. My dad grew up on a farm in the South-West of Ireland, so he had a strong accent that, to this day, some of my friends can't work out. One of the many words that resulted in mockery was 'million', which I pronounced 'mil-yun'. Another example is 'film' (fill-umm). There were also certain words that were unfamiliar to classmates, and these were gradually removed from my vocabulary. Words such as 'bold' in place of 'naughty', or using the word 'grand' where they would typically use the word 'fine'. I find myself feeling a little resentful that any sign of my cultural identity has been watered down to the point of seeming non-existent. I'm left with a feeling of emptiness, feeling little connection to any English identity but being too English to be considered Irish any longer.

Jessica Diamond

Midnight stroll

Each tender thorn, the shade of midnight winces and withers
An attempt to conceal themselves as
The crimson blush of its petals fall silently,
Forming a pool of sorrow
The root of the stem gasps for breath
With no avail
The ashen moon turns, revealing a flittering smear of sunrise
Abandoning all hope, the stem grows limp and lifeless
Lifeless petals fly through the wind
Passing through and through
With no end

Tell It to The Water

One by one, slowly they fall
Into rivers, banks and reservoirs
Hauled, pulled and dragged kicking and screaming
Through streets of cobbled stone, littered with shadows of the past.

There are men more than four hundred years old,
Championed, as beacons of hope for a neo-colonialist agenda
Dismantle and dismember their legacies,
One by one.

One by one,
Remember that only now has 'justice' begun
With the power and the will of the people
Empowered by the fury to fight for our freedom.

One by one,
They're thrown, they fall, they're discarded

Into the river they go
Sinking down into the depths
Repaying a debt to the souls they sold.

Rewritten

Ships smothered in shackles, clinging on to those they caught.
They came, they saw, they conquered- they say.
Wild eyed and full of rage, they plundered, they stole.
Gold, Diamonds, Art and treasures of old.
Their history, their legacies, their humanity was severed at the root,
Unable to restore itself in the barren land they were forced to call home.
They dreamt to be free.
They dreamt to be home.
They dreamt to be whole again.

Personal Language History

Experiences with reading

Throughout university, I read and engaged with more than 350 texts. Some of which were deeply impactful and quite transformative in who I was as a student and the person that I have become today. My personal views, politics and agenda within English came into being at university and it was the first time that I had encountered academic texts and such a diverse array of writers.

As a teacher, I find it difficult not to encourage or allow students to go off on a bit of a tangent, especially if discussions that are being stimulated are insightful and demonstrate their ability to think beyond a text. It's exciting to see young people immersed in a text and being able to talk about it critically, drawing on their own experiences. I have been met with the challenge of students who dislike reading or have more specifically only had negative encounters with reading. I've adopted the attitude that if students are reading something, whether it is regarded as "real" literature (whatever that means) or not, it is better than nothing at all. I always try to relate the importance of reading to how it may affect them in adult life by saying something along the lines of "but if you don't learn to read or to read something properly then how will you know if people are trying to take advantage of you or con through documents or letters you when you're older?". They usually sort of nod and say "yeah, fair enough". But that example is the purpose of reading in its

simplest terms. Reading should make you think and feel something, it should stimulate curiosity and ignite the embers of imagination.

The grammar of modern fiction: The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

The definite article **'the'** is used in the title as the writer is relying on the readers experiences with emotions such as hatred. The reader needs this pragmatic awareness in order to connect not only with the title but with plot and the themes that are explored in the text. **'Hate'** is an abstract noun connoting feelings of hatred and revenge. The etymology of **'hate'** derives from a blend of Germanic and Old English **'hatian'** or **'hete'** which was then replaced by the Dutch **'haten'** then the German **'hassen'**. Finally, 'hate' was formulated when Standard English attempted to conceal its Scandinavian and Western European origins. **'U'** is used to incorporate colloquial language into the title to achieve the author's acrostic title. This informal spelling of **'you'** lends itself to visual culture whilst mimicking modern text speak and is effective in supporting Thomas's use of slang and informal language throughout the text in order to authenticate the narrative of the protagonist, Starr who is living in the deprived area of Garden Heights. The noun **'Give'** means to transfer the possession of something to someone. Its etymology derives from the Germanic **'giefan'** and Old English **'gefan'** to Dutch **'geven'** which later became the Standard English **'give'**.

Capitalization and nouns

Thomas is a huge hip-hop fan and her acrostic title **'THUG'** was inspired by Tupac Shakur's quote: "The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody". This quote, most famously shown throughout the media in the form of his tattoo is commonly perceived as being negative or as inciting violence and criminal activity. Instead, one could read this quotation from a philosophical perspective that draws our attention to the way that younger generations are often left to pick up the pieces of the destruction caused by their predecessors.

It demonstrates that as a people, we need to be more conscious, mindful and aware of how the things that we do and say today will impact the lives and experiences of those tomorrow. The combination of capitalisation and nouns demonstrate Thomas' social critique of racial inequality and the systemic oppression of African Americans. In this novel the reader is forced to engage

with the experienced of African American woman, a voice that is often left on the peripheries of social commentary. To have a protagonist that is a young black girl who is given enough character development to not be presented as a monolith or one dimensional is truly ground-breaking. This is a text that I believe should be taught in schools, particularly in London. Despite the controversial topics of police brutality, racism and gender inequality, this text is exactly what this generation of young people need in order to prepare them for the realities of our modern world.

I had the privilege of teaching this text to my class of Year 8 students during my second placement at a school in North London. I was overwhelmed with their critical engagement and political commentaries that they were able to attribute to the text. As a lower ability class with significant SEN, EAL and behaviour needs, they challenged their class teacher's assumption that the text would be too difficult for them. When we believe in and trust are students and are willing to create opportunities to decolonise and diversify the curriculum to support their learning and understanding of the world they live in, brilliant things begin to happen. As texts such as this one are relatively new, there are limited resources available but if we are dedicated to using literature for liberation, we must make the time to share, create and discuss these resources.

The capitalisation and use of 'the' as a definite article seeks to validate the emotions felt by many young people that are often dismissed or perceived in a negative light. Here, the author is drawing attention to the humanity that is denied to marginalized people and foreshadows that significant events will erupt within the book in order to invoke significant social and cultural transformations.

Handwriting

To this day, I have a great deal of animosity about the fact that by the end of Primary school I didn't receive my pen license certificate. I was the only one in my class who went to secondary school as a semi-pro HB pencil handler. My handwriting is always something that I've struggled. I still struggle to sit still long enough to actually write a full sentence. I'm unable to concentrate for long enough to complete a written task and sometimes my joints making it difficult to hold a pen. There is something magical and revolutionary in the act of writing traditionally, pen to paper. I've often told my students that the pen is the most powerful weapon that they can possess, not that they believe of course.

My handwriting changes daily (psychoanalyze that if you will). Sometimes it is large and straight, sometimes it is slanted as if part of the stage directions

of a script. Sometimes it looks as if you've given a chicken a pen license and let it run free. It depends on my mood, on my emotional investment in the task and my concentration. I have a deep-rooted emotional connection to writing with ink because I feel ownership and control over my thoughts, feelings and ideas. Of course, you can scribble or cross bits out that you no longer need but there is something therapeutic and almost cathartic about the whole process of being able to make mistakes and redraft and redraft until the final draft is complete.

Spelling

My experience with spelling from my earliest memory was Look, Cover, Write and Check. I remember being sat at the dining table, almost against my will and practicing spellings with my Mum. I was always good at remembering how to spell things, but it took me until I was 11 to be able to spell 'said' as 'said' and 'becuase' as 'because'. I was 14 when I was able to spell 'experience' correctly. These words along with my inability to sit still for any significant length of time meant that I was placed in a 'special' focus group with EAL and SEN students in Primary school, my Mum was not happy about that and I remember her being really angry at me for being put in the group.

When working with students who have trouble with spelling, I have encouraged them to break the word down and then sound it out. I've often used visuals to encourage them to discuss the word before putting it into context in a compound sentence. I think that the advice on TES and Guardian Education are helpful because it gives food for thought and some inspiration on how to make learning to spell engaging and fun and engaging as opposed to the pressure of having to "get it right". I remember an incident when I was in year 4 where we were working on our spellings and the extension task was to find new words. I remember the teacher making me sit on my own, slamming a Thesaurus on the table and saying, "you can find words in there, **if** you even know how to use it". I felt humiliated and really hurt that she'd assumed that I wouldn't know what a Thesaurus was or how to use it.

Speaking

"You speak like a white person."

What does that mean? I've concluded that people have a very rigid set of expectations of how I should speak or indeed how black people should speak. Speaking freely in a way that is comfortable to you can make others feel

alienated or ill at ease if you do not fit in with their conception of who they think you are and how they think you should speak. This form of policing language is very damaging and hurtful.

This incident, is one that I will never forget, and I have witnessed similar situations unfold in schools that I have worked in...

In year 10, I was about to go into my Maths lesson when I remembered that I needed to phone my Mum to double check the time of a Doctor's appointment later that day. My Maths teacher had given me permission to do so. When I was at the end of the corridor another teacher came along shouting at me to get off the phone, so I did (he caught me on a compliant day). I then said "But sir gave me permission to call my mum before going to the lesson" to which he replied: "Oh I was just on my phone innit" (in what I can only assume he thought was a generic 'London' accent while waving his arms about). I was so taken aback by what he'd said and the way he'd said it but I managed to reply by saying: "but I didn't say it like that, did I sir?". By now there were two other teachers looking very shocked and other students who had gathered to see what was going on. He suddenly looked around, looked at the ground and then said "No, quite right, you didn't. Get to lesson". I had never felt more humiliated at school than at that moment. He seen me and made an assumption about how I spoke, despite hearing what I said had in my usual way, he wasn't able to put his prejudice aside. I remember wanting to cry during the whole Maths lesson and feeling an overwhelming sense of hopelessness because it seemed like I couldn't escape from being judged or stereotyped.

I shared this extract with one of my Year 9 classes and before I revealed that this was an experience I had at school, it was fascinating to hear this views on the incident. Many of them were visibly shocked and offended by the situation mentioning that Teachers should not make those judgements or mock students for how they speak because they are meant to be role models who champion acceptance. Others focused on the nuanced racial tones present in the situation and were confused about why the teacher felt it was appropriate to stereotype and mock the student in question. As they were preparing to write their own Personal Language Histories, we had a wonderful class discussion about our experiences with language and the emotions attributed to them.

Michael Dench

Reflections

Reflections on writing in education, or prior to...

I submit some poems and my Personal Language History to this anthology and think, what am I doing and why?

I am a Secondary English Teacher now, or very nearly, so I am not the student, have done my bit. I need not worry myself with creative tasks. I am finished.

I don't believe any of that. I am probably less and less finished the more I interrogate the idea. Writing is a way of putting it all down and acknowledging the imperfections of any constructed version of a finished self.

These are not great poems.

Some of these pieces have been written in response to professional research modules. Some of these pieces link directly to research articles that I have found interesting, inspiring, worrying, enraging. Occasionally, as I have engaged with the issues and the intellectual hoopla that they demand, I have looked away. I have looked out of the window, down at my desk, into the future or the past of my experience and I have picked up a pen and written. Sometimes a word or a phrase has got lodged in my mind and I have repeated and repeated it until I have needed to bury it in other words. On one occasion, I was distracted by the way the word 'scar' was buried in a paragraph between 'parents/carers' with a perfectly proud slash through it. Other times I have needed to just walk into an imagined scenario so that I could test out a thought or a sequence. Probably every time, I have been surprised by what the finished pieces seemed to say.

So if there were a final lesson (there will surely be many more) before embarking on the career that the Goldsmiths PGCE has set ahead of me, maybe it is that students need to be distracted, should be allowed time to stare out of the window and make their own meanings, should be encouraged to seek out the meanings that no one else, including you, *teacher*, can see is there.

Our Best

social justice internal moderation
Maslow's pyramid of self starters
engaged to protect family neighbours
abhor others
or to be nice to in rainbows
on white paper in
pretty window or
primary activity during lockdown
acknowledge that she is doing ok
but is scared of the bus
that he is desperate for
football or is not
engaged to the screens
and that the driver is the
loser and that is a sad story
we want change we meditate
well we have only what we need
and you know the rest is on
orders to arrive in healthy
quantities so I clapped and stopped
appropriately and the area is so supportive
of each same other and
heart bleeds but mine is
thicker than yours
I mean water
I meant water
*cough
*ahem
I meant my blood
I meant yours

Groundwork

He walked into a debate,
hit it head on and laughed.
The class felt their equalisers pressed down,
slowly became silent.
I am here to close this down.
I am here to tell you how to talk.
I am here to tell you, you may not even attempt

to comment on yourself, each other, or me.

That is my job.

Thank you, sir, said the class.

Yes, thank me. That is the first lesson.

In time the class became adept at the first lesson.

He was pleased with the progress and with how his voice had been heard, complied with.

It appears I have gifted you a voice.

Now for a question. How do you like your voice?

We like our voice very much, sir.

Our voice is almost as good as your voice, sir.

One child turned to another and said,

but your voice..., and stopped, remembering the first lesson.

Go on, he said. The child continued,

your voice is not as much like sir's voice as our voice is.

He smiled. *Well done.*

Their voice is truly not as much like my voice as the rest of your voices.

Let me make a plan. And he did.

Following the plan, the class became more equal, more equivalent, more homogenous, with greater potential for happiness, in his opinion.

Are you prepared for something dangerous?, he said.

The children were quiet. He enjoyed the silence for a short time, then made the face which meant that he expected an answer.

Sir, we are prepared if you think we are prepared. Are we prepared?

He surveyed them and said, *you may never be prepared,*

I had thought that you may never be prepared.

It is a dangerous world.

Would you like to move forward despite your lack?

Is it required of us to move forward despite our lack?, the class asked back.

Good question. What would you prefer?, he said.

We would like to be told, sir.

Then the world remains dangerous, he said,

but you have been made safe.

Now we may negotiate.

The Educational Setting

—is school is
#cool is
not 'setting'
is on ability [setting the
work for studious
tasks] and setting
immoveable text it
is a glade and grass
setting is, serene, setting is
urban and
transient if setting
the intertext,

setting, the
environment
right for
current-cohort* to
survive it and
challenge
the set up and set down
upend and
downtrod

the arrival is set (...)
so place of evaluate
pupils is seen to *be*
needed by
their abc forwardseeing
their set sights ;-)
on task ahead
head on
depends on
occasion
and occasionally
on setting.

Assessment (with text taken from TES article, Pedagogy Focus: Assessment)

continuous
end of unit
to
interventions put in
as a result
the other final
what has been
mark report
can then be shared
and s/car
this is pupils can
start point vital
...easuring ...gress
assess process
"tricks"
stress test
perform
expectation
feedback
uneasy
feedback
skills
un dressed

A Personal Language History

Let me start with Yellow:

Yellow, a noun, should be easy, right?

I worried my teachers at Riverview Primary School who thought I was clever but were concerned that I could not pronounce yellow. I would say *le-low* with the correct vowel sounds but with a *le* as in *let* sound. My mother was not impressed when she was called in. I could say *you* and I could definitely *yell*. My mother could yell. I witnessed language in front of me and thought of language as a judgement on me. I was entertained by my pronunciation and didn't particularly want to drop it just for correctness, and look what I had done in my mistake; created a scene in which the teachers cared for my tongue and my mother cared for my tongue and it all played out with me at the centre. Yellow was not my favourite colour, that was blue, would always be blue.

Fish Fingers

I look it up just now to check there is no hyphen and that is part of my then and now with words; that I could be so certain in the past and now I worry. Fish fingers, a composite made of two words which in separation conjure teaming oceans and rivers or the tap, tap of impatience, the point and accusation of the law. Fish fingers were nothing so complicated; orange/brown coating and soft, creamy, pure white flakes, with chips and ketchup or with sandwiches... and ketchup. Ten in a box, they lived in the freezer and were served in twos or threes to my brother and me. When my mother started to nuke them in her new microwave I rejected the disappointing mulchy sticks. They tasted yellow, I told her. Asked what I meant, I couldn't really elaborate. 'Yellow, like a banana?'. No, not like that, but somehow, yes, exactly.

Mother

Important, imperial, gentle, joyous, provider and absentee. I say mother now, quite often. I like the way it looks when written. Its majestic M at the start of a sentence, or if I were to address her directly in speech. Mother. That M housing the little letters, protecting them as they gather behind it. That M being the first foot through the door to make sure the *other* will be safe.

I used to say mum. I would always say mum. Mum is the way and what I would say. Now if I say, *I miss you, Mum*, that feels indulgent and perhaps too reminiscent of damp pillows and curtain-drawn nights.

To say Mother, I invoke her presence in an adult way, the way I have never been able to do in life. Language can be very cool like that.

Going Away

Verb and adverb. It's complicated. I had to look it up.

There is a lot of going away that happens or that you do in a 42 years life. It's a threat, sometimes, hanging over you, that something, your youth for example, is going away constantly. I am going away. The *I* is moving and constant. The phrase is somehow static and grounded. *I am going away*. How do you reconcile its feel with its meaning? How do you say that I will move, flee, be gone? That *I am*, as in ultimate presence. *Am*, the first person singular present of *be*. I be. I am. Going away. It is very very sad.

Wuthering Heights

I think about Activated Prior Knowledge and think what a silly phrase. Prior to whom? When I read Emily Bronte's classic novel I was lost in a world that felt exactly right. It wasn't a knowing that had come prior but a knowing that was somewhere else. Think of her and her experience of the world, for the most part enclosed in a family home with her father and sisters and her precocious brother. Where did she have the experience of these darkneses and truths? It is something she communicates with utmost knowing. Her authorship, though un-intrusive through the text, is so present that I cannot help but think I was in communication with her, 13 year old boy as I was, on a sofa in a lounge filled with my father's cigarette smoke. One day he snatches the book and reads something of Joseph's almost illegible dialogue.

'Why are you reading an American novel?' I am asked.

I tell him it's not, that it's set in Yorkshire, but I am a child and I am wrong in the realm of the lounge and it is not worth fighting (though I think I did). Where I was right was with the words on the page and with Emily, who knew what I knew.

Po - Et - Ree

finding that I had missed the point in most of my attempted ambushes on literature I started to look to break
up lines

find meaning in in in in the small details of what can be said in a poem
 which made me a student of modern poetry in that way entirely useless
 thinking that I had any idea what poetry could be and was
 so as cummings grasshopper leaped from

r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r

the page and mR Hughes

cRow shadowed all my moves forward I also discovered the small pools of
 worship in Emily Berry and the silver darts of Ocean Vuong

one Archaic is who it really took to get me there in in in in teaching

when really I looked and found that — in poetry

there is no place that does not see me I heard Rilke’s direction:

you must change your

so I did

f-i-l-e

life

under

— now what?

Ben Dooley

The Virus Spreads

Even in the sunshine the virus spreads.

We sit inside, all of us, and wait because the virus spreads.

We sleep in too late or we wake in fear because the virus spreads.

The virus spreads and so we sit inside. It’s like it knows.

The virus spreads when we are not looking, though we could not see it anyway.

The virus spreads and it has even joined us in our dreams.

It’s in the air that the virus spreads, when we are not looking.

It’s in our thoughts – the virus spreads when we are not thinking too.

Even in our hearts the virus spreads – this is the danger.

Reading History

I have always enjoyed stories and reading. I remember my parents reading
 to me at a young age. A story I particularly liked involved a beast with a
 thousand teeth who liked eating sweets. I remember enjoying the colours of

the sweets and imagining eating them. I also had a book called *The Mirrorglass* which had an opaque mirror on the cover and perhaps had others all the way through. This was a story about mystery and the mirror - like the colourful sweets - also sparked my imagination. We also had a story book written by a teacher at my primary school who my parents knew, that was about an Asian girl. I liked this storybook, but I particularly internalised my parents' feelings that the book was 'lovely' and the sense that it was important that our culture represent people from all backgrounds. My strong interest in reading was particularly influenced by my parents who are both English teachers.

From a young age my reading experience was always closely connected with personal creative writing. A particular influence in this creative impulse was my father who is a published poet (along with my aunt and uncle). From when I was young I was aware of the importance of this to my father and sought to emulate this, wanting to be a writer (though I liked the idea of making a career out of it too). The earliest memory I have of my creative writing was a story in middle school about a knight. This is all I remember about the story, other than that I drew a picture of a knight at the top and that I enjoyed writing a story of adventure. However, I also have a story and picture book that I apparently wrote with my father when I younger called 'Benedict and the Robots', which has a picture of R2D2 on the front.

At the age of around 10 I saw the television series *The Animals of Farthing Wood* and then read the book of the same title that it was based on, by Colin Dann. I particularly liked the character of Mole in this novel, with whom I identified, who was quiet, hiding away, and had glasses, but who was also quite funny. I also liked the fact that it had a range of characters with different personality types, which was the particular inspiration on my attempt to emulate it with a 'novel' of my own about animals (which is now, unfortunately, lost). I also enjoyed writing poetry in class and was proud in a class when my English teacher said that my poem (heavily inspired by Stevie Smith's 'Not Waving but Drowning') was the best (though, on reflection, this is perhaps not the best pedagogical approach).

Later I studied for a degree in Literature and Film and so read many of the standard texts to be expected. I was particularly impressed during my degree by the effects produced by the stream-of-consciousness style in *Mrs Dalloway*, a style that I am currently particularly excited by having read a few novels in this style this Summer. I also studied Shakespeare at university, particularly enjoying the History Plays. I went on to study for an MA in Media and a PhD in Film Studies meaning that my reading became very academic in nature. When I read fiction at this time I tended to seek out 'classics' in a fairly random way, seeking to fill my brain with the 'best literature'.

More recently, in the last five years or so, I have returned to creative writing – including poetry, short stories and attempts at novels. I have been surprised by the change in my reading patterns as a result. I now choose my reading with far more discernment and individuality, picking texts to help me with my writing, as well as reading a lot more non-fiction, particularly Popular Science books, that help me to think more broadly about life as a whole. The direct connection between reading, writing, curiosity and personal self-development has returned and I am very glad of this.

Personal Growth and Shakespeare

How might you develop your pedagogy as an English teacher to become a creative, critical and reflective classroom practitioner?

A consideration of the role of personal growth within English pedagogy, with a focus on William Shakespeare's Macbeth

Introduction

In this essay I will provide an evaluation of the various pedagogical options available to an English teacher seeking to teach Shakespeare, framing this within a critical understanding of the pressures upon them within the UK education system. This essay argues against developments within the National Curriculum that have transformed English into a highly prescriptive subject focused largely on the gaining of practical skills and the valorisation of our cultural heritage. It is argued here that this has been to the detriment of various other aspects inherent in the subject, particularly its potential to allow for students' personal growth, the argument set forth at the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College in 1966 and captured in John Dixon's *Growth Through English* (1967). This concept is multi-faceted and will be described in greater detail. However, at its centre it upholds the importance of a learner-centred education, epitomised in D. W. Harding's later suggestion that, 'The experience of art is a thing of our making, an activity in which we are our own interpretive artist.' (1977, 391). This essay will argue for the greater inclusion of a personal growth model of English in the UK education system, offering evidence that this should improve student performance in many areas of the subject. It will draw on a range of examples of the teaching of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, from myself and others and will discuss lesson activity ideas, with a focus on personal growth. It is not being suggested that personal growth is the only, or indeed even the most important, aspect of the subject, nor that a focus on this necessarily involves the discarding or minimizing of

other aspects of English. Rather, it is being argued that a greater emphasis on personal growth in English education will be to the benefit of all other areas of the subject, as well as being of value in itself.

Literature Review

In his article 'The Turbulent Times of Creativity in the National Curriculum', written under New Labour, Alpesh Maisuria draws attention to Prime Minister James Callaghan's 1976 speech at Ruskin College Oxford, which he says significantly changed the nature of education, arguing that:

The child-centred approach to education advocated by progressive educationalists such as John Dewey, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Plato had been replaced by a more structured curriculum emphasising the core skills of literacy and numeracy. In effect, this was the beginning of a new centralised education system driven by economics; this is mirrored by New Labour's education system today. (142)

Following the introduction of the Education Reform Act of 1988, which introduced the National Curriculum, Professor Brian Cox and his team were commissioned by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales to write a report 'to advise them on appropriate attainment targets and programmes of study for English' (Cox, 3). Maisuria notes that Cox's report ultimately 'installed a rigid and prescriptive educational framework, consequently squeezing the principles of creativity and autonomy out of teaching and learning' (142). Nevertheless aspects of the Cox Report appeared far more liberal in its attitude to education than the Conservative government of the time had hoped for. This is evidenced by the fact it was published with the report's later chapters 15-17 with more immediate prescriptive value at the start (on Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing), demoting Cox's earlier chapters, which engage more broadly with the social and political role of education. Indeed chapter 2 of the report, titled 'English in the National Curriculum', opens with a quotation from left-wing cultural critic Raymond Williams's 1965 book *The Long Revolution*, which states that:

... the content of education, which is subject to great historical variation, ... expresses, ... both consciously and unconsciously, certain basic elements in the culture, what is thought of as "an education" being in fact a particular selection, a particular set of emphases and omissions. (Williams, in Cox, 57)

In this chapter Cox and his team assert two central and complementary purposes behind the studying of English, which are that it 'contributes to the personal development of the individual child' and that it 'contributes to [the child's] preparation for the adult world' (59). They continue by drawing

attention to five different views of the role of English as a subject (both as language and literature) to be found within the profession. Firstly, English is seen as necessary for the child's personal growth, developing their learning and their imaginative and aesthetic lives; secondly, it is seen as having a cross-curricular role in providing access to other subjects; thirdly it is seen as preparing children for the language demands of adult life; fourthly, it is seen to provide access to literature as a part of our cultural heritage; and fifthly, it develops our abilities at cultural analysis, helping children to gain a critical understanding of the world (60). The team note that different teachers will prioritise different perspectives, depending upon their values and tastes.

The same might be said of successive UK governments, which have consistently asserted a greater emphasis on the adult skills and cultural heritage arguments for English, over personal growth, cross-curricular and cultural analysis arguments, in an approach combining neoliberal economic policy with sociocultural traditionalism. This can be seen in the highly prescriptive approach taken in the more recent 2013 national curriculum of Secretary of State Michael Gove, already suggested in a 2010 speech to the Conservative Party conference:

We need to reform English. The great tradition of our literature - Dryden, Pope, Swift, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Austen, Dickens and Hardy - should be at the heart of school life. Our literature is the best in the world - it is every child's birthright and we should be proud to teach it in every school. (Gove, in Coles, 72-3)

Adam Morby, however, argues that Gove's focus in his 2013 syllabus on nineteenth century literature, Shakespeare and poetry benefit those from wealthier class backgrounds. Morby draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, the notion that individuals inherit cultural knowledge from their environments, which they become able to use to gain an advantageous position within society (Morby, 503). He suggests that this prescriptive approach will lead to a 'widening [of] the gap between those from environments rich in exchangeable literary and linguistic capital and those from environments lacking in exchangeable literary and linguistic capital.' (Morby, 509). For Morby, Shakespeare is an example that will suit children from wealthier backgrounds likely to have 'a wider range of vocabulary, an all round better elaborated code, a greater wealth of linguistic habitus, and a better inherent understanding of the syntax of the seventeenth century (i.e. those who might have visited the theatre)' (Morby, 507). Although elements of Morby's argument have been contested, particularly his suggestion that those from less privileged backgrounds could have a greater inherent understanding of syntax, I agree with the basic point about the limitations of a

restrictive National Curriculum. In conversation with teachers in one of my placement schools, in which the greater proportion of the pupils are EAL, one of the teachers expressed to me his view that year 7 pupils learning Shakespeare, particularly those with EAL. Indeed this surely involves the pupil being forced to understand and analyse not only a second language text, but one written in a particularly complex and in parts archaic formation of that second language. However, as Clyde Chitty has noted, such a development towards a conservative, prescriptivist approach to English did not begin with Gove:

Gove was successful ... because he was representative of powerful forces within the Right, and indeed beyond the Right, encompassing modernising forces within the so-called Left. The large-scale privatisation of education and dismantling of local authority power were projects which secured the wholehearted endorsement of New Labour under both Blair and Brown. (Chitty, 337)

The increasing neoliberalism of English can particularly be seen in the greater emphasis placed on examinations as the principal means of assessment, with highly prescriptive assessment criteria, as has been noted by Pasi Sahlberg (2016). This has transformed English into a subject that focuses on practical language skills, easily transferable to the working world, to the detriment of deeper personal and sociocultural knowledge.

In recent years it is becoming increasingly recognized within education that examinations in English can be in many ways detrimental to learning. John Yandell has picked apart the many limitations of a 2006 exam paper on Richard III (2008). In his article, he then focuses on a pupil's exam response that received a very low mark of 2 out of 18, demonstrating that the pupil's response showed some depth of understanding of the play and that the low mark given reflected primarily the student's inability to write a literary critical essay in examination conditions. Yandell bases this argument on observations he had made of the student for the term prior to the exam, demonstrating the extreme limitations of exams as assessment and pointing to the potential value of a return to a greater emphasis on formative rather than summative assessment. Elsewhere Chris Watkins has drawn attention to the way in which examinations alter strategies both of teaching and learning, employed by teachers and students to the detriment of performance (2010). Watkins points to a study in which two groups of teachers were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, with those in the first told that their job was to help the pupils learn, while those in the second were told that their job was to ensure children perform well. The study found that when the students were subsequently tested those exposed to pressured teachers using controlling strategies did less

well (3). For Watkins, this study demonstrates that 'teaching to the test' can often actually be detrimental to success within that test, since it can encourage in children a performance orientation, seeking to *prove* one's competence, rather than a learning orientation, that seeks to *improve* one's competence. Watkins notes that 'individuals who scored high on a learning orientation select and use deep learning strategies which leads them to assume responsibility with high levels of persistence, they use more strategies, and possess more metacognitive knowledge about their learning.' (4) This latter argument points particularly to the importance of the need for a return in education to a focus on personal growth.

All of which suggests the need for a return to the values put across in John Dixon's *Growth Through English* published in 1967, a book based on ideas developed at the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College in the previous year which argued for the importance of placing the individual child's development at the centre of education. In the 1975 edition of that book, Dixon argues that:

It seems an elementary mistake to demand a list of skills, proficiencies and knowledge as the basis for an English curriculum. Demands of this kind produce two wrong kinds of answer: answers so detailed that we determine, let's say, the books every child should read by a particular stage; or answers so general that the skills, etc., described are not amenable to being put in order one after the other. (85)

As Peter Smagorinsky notes, *Growth Through English* is 'an argument against what we have come to think of as traditional teaching, what Dixon refers to as a curriculum built around skills and cultural heritage' (2002, 24). In contrast, Dixon advocates that discussion should play a greater role in classrooms involving students speaking to each other about things that matter to them; that writing should be exploratory, rather than following formal conventions; that attention should be paid to process as much as product, focusing on exploratory language processes; that the lives of learners should play a central role; that teachers should be less authoritarian, liberating pupils from the limitations of the teacher's vision; that this liberation should include freedom from textbook language in favour of dialects and colloquialisms. Dixon also emphasizes the importance of drama, beyond formal theatre, in education, arguing that movement and gesture can aid in the expression of meaning and that improvisation can allow for deliberate and conscious collaboration. Further, the narrative framework of drama, with its emphasis on the use of repetition and unity, enables action more easily to take on symbolic status, enhancing learning (25). Smagorinsky has drawn attention, however, to one shortcoming of Dixon's argument, which he describes as the way in which:

personal growth is valorized without attention to the social responsibilities that accompany growing and participating in a society. In *Growth through English*, personal growth is viewed as an educational end in itself. Both Dixon and many contemporary educational writers appear to assume that this growth will always be noble, respectful, and socially constructive. (26)

The following section of this essay will analyse and evaluate some major pedagogical approaches to teaching Shakespeare, with a focus on their capacity to allow for personal growth within the classroom. It will also, however, point to ways in which these pedagogies can extend beyond Dixon's framework to engage with the English classroom's sociopolitical dynamics. Along the way ideas for lesson activities rooted in personal growth and based on *Macbeth* will be suggested.

English as Personal Growth: Some Approaches and Practical

Reflections

Firstly, English and Shakespeare can be taught via what is typically termed the traditionalist approach. A key influence on traditionalist approaches is F. R. Leavis who, in his book on the English novel *The Great Tradition*, asserts that:

it is well to start by distinguishing the few really great – the major novelists who count in the same way as the major poets, in the sense that they not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.' (Leavis, 1948, 10)

For Leavis, literary criticism's task was a defence against mass culture, seeking to define and uphold a canon of history's great writers. Leavis's approach argued that the text existed as an artwork separable from the wider world. His formalist study of texts, sought for their deeper meanings via close analysis, with their broader contexts treated as of little or no consequence. In his discussion of the traditionalist approaches to Shakespeare, Robert Eaglestone has suggested three reasons most commonly used for the necessity of studying the playwright: the plays' artistic (or aesthetic worth); the values taught by the plays; and their universal appeal (Eaglestone, 2009, 64). A recent example of such a traditionalist is Harold Bloom, who asserts in his book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, that:

The more one reads and ponders the plays of Shakespeare the more one realizes that the accurate stance towards them is one of awe. ... Bardolatry ... the worship of Shakespeare, ought to be even more a secular religion than it already is. ... Shakespeare will go on explaining us, in part because he invented us. (Bloom, xvii)

Leavis and Bloom's perspectives both offer some value to a personal growth approach to teaching, since both are deeply rooted in a European humanist tradition that asserts the value of language to human life. Indeed where Leavis sees literature as allowing 'an awareness of the possibilities of life' Bloom implies the value of Shakespeare's 'explaining us'. Engaging with such discussion on the complexity of the understanding of human nature within literature, particularly through character, will surely be effective to encourage pupils to consider their own personality, allowing for personal growth through reflection and maturation. Further, there is something in the admiration of 'heroic' writers that is undeniably attractive within popular culture and could certainly serve to attract students to the topic, as well as to value the written word.

However, traditionalist assertions of the value of language, as in the above quotations from both Leavis and Bloom, tend to be limited by their focus being solely on the authors under discussion, which unfortunately tends to translate into a pedagogy whereby the writer is given greater precedence than the student, in teacher-led classes in which the teacher is taken to hold the knowledge of the text. Traditionalists also tend to hold fairly conservative views of social order, which can be alienating to pupils who would seek to challenge norms within society. For instance, in his book on Shakespeare *The Elizabethan World Picture* traditionalist E. M. W. Tillyard argues that in Shakespeare's plays we see a reflection of the historical idea of the Great Chain of Being, the notion that everyone has a fixed place within the social (and cosmological) order, claiming that 'the conception of order is so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages.' (Tillyard, 7) Where for Tillyard the assertions of social order in a few didactic passages suggests only an unambiguous collective faith, Jonathan Dollimore has suggested that these didactic passages were rather 'a strategy of ideological struggle', 'an anxious reaction to emergent and (in)-subordinate social forces which were perceived as threatening' (Dollimore and Sinfield, 5). Tillyard's overly simplistic ideas about the 'collective mind' reflect a traditionalist attraction to authority that is likely to be alienating to students who wish to use Shakespeare to develop a critical understanding of society, such as those within positions of sociopolitical minority, such as women, ethnic minorities, those who are LGBT, who may feel socially oppressed, as well as allies of these groups.

Alternative approaches to English and to Shakespeare can be seen in new historicism in the US and cultural materialism in the UK, both of which challenge traditionalist perspectives of literary texts as mirrors to a unified and monolithic social order, through an emphasis on close understanding of the

texts' social and historical contexts, particularly drawing attention to conflict. As Sinfield summarises, new historicism focuses on 'the production of ideology through representation', noting the 'theatricality through which the state manifests its power', which is set alongside 'the power that passes through the theatre' (Sinfield, 8). New historicists are highly concerned with how different kinds of discourse 'intersect, contradict, destabilise, cancel or modify each other' and tend to see dissidence as always contained (D Wayne, cited in Sinfield, 9). While cultural materialism, influenced by Raymond Williams and European Marxism and socialism, is similar, it tends to see more possibility of dissidence within texts and society. Elsewhere Dollimore also notes that 'materialist criticism refuses to privilege "literature" in the way that literary criticism has done hitherto ... This approach necessitates a radical contextualising of literature which eliminates the old divisions between literature and its "background", text and context.' (Dollimore and Sinfield, 4) Such a position leads Dollimore to attack what he calls 'idealist literary criticism', such as that of traditionalists such as Leavis and Bloom, which he sees as a rejection of history for a naive idea of a 'transhistorical human condition'. Dollimore asserts that cultural materialism is, in contrast to traditionalist literary criticism, necessarily anti-humanist.

In considering whether such a cultural materialist model of English would be of value for the promotion of personal growth within the classroom, it can be noted first that, as already suggested, it allows for a space for those from outsider social groups to recognize their own social oppression and imagine challenges of these. Students can find such oppression within the texts and contexts, whether referenced by the writers consciously or unconsciously and whether challenged by them or not. For instance, discussion of the traditional roles of men and women in the patriarchal Jacobean era and the ways in which Lady Macbeth's character does or does not conform to these can lead students to a range of different ideas about the play, encouraging women to recognize forms of social oppression that remain in the present day. Further, an exploration of King James I's persecution of women accused of being witches and the knowledge that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in part to compliment the king could encourage a discussion on whether Shakespeare was a conformist or whether he was challenging gender roles of the time. This could lead into a planned lesson involving a trial of Shakespeare, where the class puts Shakespeare on trial for writing a sexist text with the students divided between being his legal counsel, defending his portrayal of women in the play and the prosecution arguing against it. It would be useful to introduce this lesson emphasizing that we cannot know for sure what Shakespeare's intentions were and that different interpretations can be equally valid. Thus although there

could be some risk of some pupils fixating too heavily on needing to know for sure what Shakespeare intended, the debate ought primarily to fuel a healthy debate, which can extend out to the context of Jacobean society and even our own society, particularly if encouraged in this direction by the teacher. Although it would be tempting to make the playtext the subject of the trial, I do not feel this would have the basic human value and pleasure than putting 'Shakespeare' on trial would have and think that the danger of the 'intentional fallacy' may be a price worth paying, if framed well and countered where necessary, for the sake of student engagement and learning. Although such an exercise could run the risk of encouraging a naïve intentional fallacy, in relation to Dixon's ideas on personal growth, we could say that such an approach would foster collaborative learning within the 'teams' and (once the format had been established) would make the lesson less authoritarian than typical since it would allow students to lead their own discussion. Further, while students would be expected to have prepared quotations and ideas from the play in advance, they would nevertheless be fully allowed to speak in their dialects and colloquialisms, particularly useful to those who struggle with written as opposed to oral English. On a political level, it can also be noted that such an exercise would also serve as a form of praxis, leading students to think more deeply about the positions of women within society.

However, cultural materialist critics offer more to teachers and students for the purposes of personal growth in the classroom than John Dixon's conception of this, as, has already been suggested, their ideas and analyses are typically aligned with an outlook of social responsibility critical of the status quo, seeking to challenge norms and conventions. In this respect it has parallels with the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (Freire, 1970). This can be seen for instance in Jonathan Dollimore's critique of the dominant conception of Shakespeare's tragedy which he argues is largely rooted in A. C. Bradley's ideas (despite the many popular criticisms of Bradley's speculative analysis of Shakespeare's characters). (136-148) Dollimore argues that Bradley universalized the concept of tragedy making it largely seen to be a form representing how elite individuals create their own doom, within a framework of an inevitability that appears mysterious. In contrast he draws attention to Raymond Williams's depiction of the wide range of different tragedies that have been written and written about, which derive from many cultures, and suggests that tragedy is 'not a single and permanent kind of fact' and that 'the varieties of tragic experience are to be interpreted by reference to the changing conventions and institutions.' (Williams, 46-7). Thus where Bradley's notion of tragedy would seem alien to the modern world and would seem only to relate to the individual experience of 'man', Williams's

instead relates to society, including the various kinds of modern suffering that exist such as war, poverty and hunger. A broadening out of our understanding of tragedy, including the recognition of its social dimension, could allow for a consideration of the ways in which Macbeth's tragic experiences could be compared to recent cultural experiences that might be described as tragic, such as the traumatic experiences of those returning from war in Iraq or Afghanistan with PTSD. A key problem a teacher of English would face when considering whether to explore Williams's and others' ideas about tragedy would be that of whether current examination guidelines are likely to be themselves indebted to Bradley's restrictive conception of tragedy. Teachers would also have to consider whether they can trust that the average examiner would be willing to accept alternative definitions of this when marking. I have personally experienced these concerns when teaching Keats's *The Eve of St Agnes* at on the AQA English Literature (B) A-level within the confines of tragedy.

Catherine Belsey also demonstrates cultural materialism's implicit emphasis on social responsibility, as she discusses how the development of the soliloquy in the Renaissance era (including in Shakespeare's plays) reflects the growth of individualism in that period, which can teach the audience in our current age about how this has gone too far. Equally drawing on the ideas of Raymond Williams, Belsey argues that the soliloquy in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries marks the 'condition of the possibility of presenting on the stage a new conception of the free-standing individual.' (81). The soliloquy 'makes audible the personal voice and offers access to the presence of an individual speaker.' However, the soliloquy retains within it the 'repressed discontinuities of the allegorical tradition [which] return to haunt the single voice which speaks' (82). As such the Renaissance soliloquy challenges the present-day conception of the self, which involves a separation of mind from the body, 'the effect of the humanist isolation of the mind as the essence of the subject.' (84) Belsey notes that such a return of the repressed body of the self appears as Lady Macbeth, in Act I, scene v of *Macbeth*, calls on 'spirits' to 'unsex me here', arguing that her language displays 'the contradictory nature of the subject in the early seventeenth century' (84), since she is not the primary subject of her speech, which is rather the spirits, and since where she does describe herself it is through symbolic abstractions that divide her up into crown, toe, cruelty, blood, remorse, nature, breasts, milk. (85) The conclusion of this soliloquy with its focus on heaven and hell renders the individual only the locus of a battleground between eternal forces rather than an active figure. Similarly, Belsey suggests that Macbeth's later soliloquy, in Act I, sc vii, as he contemplates the murder of Duncan might have seemed to an early

seventeenth century audience, who are used to attending to symbolism of an earlier era would have seen, in the description of pity as 'like a newborn babe' and of pride as a knight who spurs his horse forward, the hero's choice as 'a moment in the cosmic struggle with which he is continuous and which is duplicated in his own being.' (88). In contrast, for Belsey, modern audiences do not make the same instinctive link between the individual and society/the cosmos, a result of the too great emphasis on the notion of the individual. Although as a teacher I have found it tempting to teach the soliloquys of Shakespeare as though they were the outpourings of a fully realized individual character, I have often also felt this limiting. Belsey notes that this is unlikely to be how they would have been experienced at the time of their production.

A good way to draw attention to the soliloquys' blurring of lines between the mind and body, as well as the individual and society/the cosmos might be to encourage dramatic dumb performances in which the students share soliloquys. For example, for the Lady Macbeth soliloquy one partner could perform Lady Macbeth, while the other plays the spirits and a third reads the lines slowly and dramatically, as all three students gain the chance to perform both Lady Macbeth and the spirits, recognizing them as equal producers of the drama in the scene. The objective of such an activity would probably not be expect students to understand intellectually this historical aspect of the soliloquy as a form (though this could be a possible side effect with a top set KS4 or KS5 group). Rather, the main purpose would be to allow the students to take full advantage of the ways in which Shakespeare's soliloquys offer a version of selfhood less internalized and fixed than we are used to in drama of the 20th and 21st centuries as well as within contemporary society as a whole, to engage with Shakespeare's visceral mixture of mind and body, self and cosmos.

A third approach to English and to Shakespeare is that of reader-response theory, which Jonathan Culler defines as thinking 'about readers and the way they make sense of literature', that 'claims that the meaning of a text is the experience of the reader (an experience that includes hesitations, conjectures, and self-corrections).' (Culler, 59). For Culler, an interpretation of a text can be a story of the reader's encounter with the text, such as how '[i]n literary studies feminist critics have studied the various strategies by which works make a male perspective the normative one, and have debated how the study of such structures should change ways of reading – for men as well as women.' (60). An early proponent of the use of this theoretical framework in teaching was Louise Rosenblatt, who argues in *Literature as Exploration* that '[i]n the teaching of literature, then, we are basically helping our students learn to perform in response to a text. ... But the instrument on which the reader plays

and from which he evokes the work is – himself.’ (1938/1995, 265) For Rosenblatt it is necessary that the teacher of English keep alive in their students a view that the literary work exists less as the text itself than as a ‘personal evocation, the product of creative activity carried on by the reader, under the guidance of the text.’ (1938/1995, 266) A recent example of literary criticism that is in part informed by reader-response theory can be seen in Emma Smith’s *This is Shakespeare*. For Smith, Shakespeare as a writer was not only concerned with problems of his own era, but ‘with more modern themes of identity and scepticism’, highly relevant to our age, meaning that students can relate these ideas to their own lives and society (6). More than this, however, and more than other writers, Shakespeare is particularly useful for a reader-response oriented form of teaching, since:

He is fluent in our contemporary concerns, but he is not simply a mirror for our solipsistic age. Above all these plays prompt questions rather than answers. This is what gives them their edge and provocation; this is what forever implicates us in their meanings; and this is why they need your attention. (6)

Smith draws attention to the ‘gappiness’ and ‘ambiguities’ of Shakespeare’s plays that are open to multiple interpretations and adaptations.

A good analysis of the application of reader-response theory in the classroom can be seen in Anne Turvey, Monica Brady, Abbie Carpenter & John Yandell’s article ‘The many voices of the English classroom’. In this article, the teacher Monica Brady’s lessons are presented as offering an open form of teaching that follows the needs and personal knowledge of the pupils, rather than imposing knowledge onto them. The critics argue that in her evaluation of lessons Monica ‘radically repositions the activity’. Firstly she gives pupils agency, with readings constructed dialogically, making students active in the development of meaning. Secondly, despite teaching a text, she allows an image intended only to support the learning to become central to the learning, as a result of positive student response to this image. Here the critics draw attention to the way in which the teacher is willing to adapt their lesson plan, within the lesson, to suit the needs of their pupils, which appears both in a genuine engagement with the students’ own ideas and in a focus on the tasks that most engage the students, allowing for a broader, student-led understanding of what is ‘relevant’ to the topic. This argument is ‘against the orthodoxy of objective-led teaching, in which, quite explicitly, the specific reading of a particular text is subordinated to the inculcation of predetermined, generalisable, outcomes’ (63). It emphasizes particularly the value of the ‘denseness’ of a teacher’s ‘knowledge of her students’ and of her knowledge

of learning as socially and historically situated, [of] learning as irreducibly social, actualised in and through a web of sociocultural interactions' (63).

A fourth approach to English and to Shakespeare is that of active learning, sometimes referred to as teaching through drama or action-led teaching, which has a long history in education that goes back at least to John Dewey in 1902 (McPherson, 2020, 42). As has been noted John Dixon argued in 1967 for the use of drama in an education rooted in personal growth, suggesting that this allows for the development of meaning through action and the development of more deliberate and conscious collaboration, while the narrative frame of the drama allows for the repetition and unity that enables action to take on a symbolic status. This essay has further noted the ways in which this can be combined with other pedagogy frameworks such as that of cultural materialism. Such a focus on drama-led teaching has significantly increased in the discourse on pedagogy of English in recent decades with a particular focus on the teaching of Shakespeare. This has particularly been led by Rex Gibson who was director the Shakespeare and Schools Project from 1986 and edited the Cambridge School Shakespeare series, while other key proponents in the UK are the RSC, the Globe, NATE and the English and Media Centre. In the first chapter of *Teaching Shakespeare*, Gibson justifies the teaching of Shakespeare specifically by arguing that his plays all treat abiding and familiar concerns, touching on universal emotions of such as love hate, awe, jealousy and courage; that they allow for student personal development, particularly in their complex engagement with moral issues; that their language's blend of formality and flexibility as well as its energy, vividness and sensuousness allow for students' linguistic growth; and that they many of the plays involve otherness, both in the fact that they are strange to a modern audience and in the fact that the plays themselves offer up a wide range of values and characters. Out of Cox's five models of English, Gibson's arguments here particularly emphasize the value teaching Shakespeare can bring to personal growth, as well as implicitly emphasizing its role preparing children for the language demands of adult life and its role in developing our abilities at cultural analysis. Gibson places less emphasis on the cross-curricular and cultural heritage arguments for English, although it should be noted that this probably reflects what Gibson himself prioritises more than the value of Shakespeare, since both of these are often emphasized by other critics on this topic. In chapter 2, Gibson continues by suggesting that in teaching Shakespeare needs to be treated as a script to be performed, rather than as text to be read; that teaching of it as drama should be learner-centred, recognizing that learners actively make meaning; and that a successful

Shakespeare classroom should be social and co-operative. He continues to suggest that teaching of Shakespeare should be exploratory, with students encouraged to explore the plays' imaginative imagery and distinctive qualities, while teachers and students alike should feel encouraged to choose their approach to the play, with an emphasis on there being no 'one right way'.

Elsewhere Joyce McPherson in her article 'Active Learning Principles with Illustrations from Shakespeare Education' (2020) has drawn attention to a number of the benefits of active learning, which is seen particularly to develop students' personal growth. McPherson has summarized active learning's key lesson to be the need for 'transferring responsibility to the student, encouraging student-led discussion, providing for experimentation, utilizing dual coding, reflecting real-life tasks, and coordinating space for learning.' (42) Similarly to Turvey et al's reader-response theory rooted rejection of objective-led teaching, McPherson asserts that '[a]ctive learning is inductive, which means that the action precedes the concept, and experimentation is important'. McPherson draws attention to research that shows teacher-led education only works for some pupils, though she notes that drama-led teaching can be risky since it requires educators to give up control of the process as students experiment, reflect, and dialogue'. She further notes that:

In our work with Shakespeare students, the coaches have seen growth in critical thinking as students addressed questions that had become important to them as they performed a play. This type of critical thinking may not have happened if the coach had lectured on the play and made decisions for how it would be interpreted. Performing the play added a cognitive connection that a traditional classroom discussion may not have provided. (43)

She continues by drawing attention to dual coding, which active learning promotes, the idea that people learn through separate verbal and non-verbal processes in separate cognitive centres. In Shakespeare this particularly appears as 'students understand the text through movement, spoken words, and visual scenes.' Finally, McPherson notes that '[t]he coaches believe that the process of learning to portray another character enables students to express emotion, and it results in personal progress in dealing with their feelings, another type of learning.' All of the above would then suggest that active learning is essentially for an education that would seek to allow for students' self-growth.

A good example of such teaching of English through drama has been given by Richard Adams and Gerald Gould on *Macbeth* Act 4 sc 3 in which Malcolm puts Macduff to the test to see if he is loyal (1977, pp. 28-35). Adams and Gould suggest that we introduce the topic of a mistrustful interaction between two

people by having students throw a ball between each other, attempting to trick the other in their throw, then by the pairs role-playing conversations where one picks a quarrel and the other tries to avoid it, then where one is a detective trying to trap the other who is a suspect in an interview, then where one is an explorer, trying to recruit men and women with particular qualities, such as toughness and courage. This would then lead into students reading the scene dramatically and answering questions from the teacher to check understanding of the basic meaning, before working in groups to consider how the play might continue. This then leads to students discussing in pairs how the characters might behave when marching North to Scotland and improvising a scene on this followed by students looking in their texts to see what actually does happen. Finally, the pairs are encouraged to produce a reading of Act 4 scene 3, with prompts and suggestions from the teacher. This lesson plan uses active role-play to prepare students for the key themes and interactions in the scene, allowing them to collaboratively and creatively come to understandings of these themes that are personal and embodied, with meaning developed in a socially constructive manner. By following the reading of the play with questioning the teacher ensures to use scaffolding, recognizing that higher levels of student learning of a text are only possible after a basic understanding of its literal meaning. The teacher returns to collaborative and active learning as in pairs they predict the feelings of the characters before performing the text, which allows again for a creative engagement with the text itself, ensuring that students are forced into 'one right way' of reading the text's deeper meanings, but can decide this for themselves.

Yet while there is much to praise about drama-led teaching of English, Jane Coles has drawn attention to some limitations of the practical application of this pedagogy within the contemporary English classroom, emphasising particularly a tension between this approach and the current emphasis on exam-based assessment in our National Curriculum. Coles's article does not place the blame solely either on current assessment practices or on drama-led pedagogy, suggesting instead what she sees as a 'false dichotomy' in some current teaching practice 'between "desk-bound" teaching (bad) and "active teaching" (good)', which serves to limit consideration of the student as a reader (34). Coles bases her analysis on close observation of six year 9 classes on *Macbeth* by a highly talented teacher called Marie, who she notes is ideologically opposed to the SATS, using drama-led teaching for four out of the six lessons. Coles argues, however, that the teacher gives no other justification in her teaching for the study of Shakespeare than the need to pass the SATS test. Coles notes that the students did not even finish the play in their lessons, studying in detail only two scenes, due to the fact that these were the scenes

that would come up in the exams. She notes that despite the students' clear engagement and enthusiasm within the drama-led teaching, which dominated the time of the teaching, students stated emphatically at the end of the term that they did not want to study another Shakespeare play, since the SATS regime had put them off. Coles is thus highly critical of current assessment processes, noting that 'examinations are never simply an ideologically neutral way of assessing students, but convey a complex web of messages about officially assumed values, curriculum priorities and tacitly understood traditions. She draws particularly on Pierre Bourdieu's suggestion in his 1976 article 'Systems of education and systems of thought' that 'exams serve to mediate works of art in official ways which offer cultural legitimacy, institutionalise specific cultural practices within education and, moreover, establish hierarchies' (47). Coles suggests 'that the process Bourdieu describes is brought into even sharper focus when a cultural icon such as Shakespeare is made a compulsory element of national curriculum tests, and that "active Shakespeare" techniques, valuable as they are in many ways, offer an inadequate antidote.' (47) Further, Coles suggests that, within much of the available literature on drama-led teaching, 'pedagogic purpose, beyond the unspoken but obvious need to prepare students for the SATs test, remains unclear.' (35) Coles argues that there is a tendency to focus on method over pedagogy and that providing 'access' to reified texts (and particularly the figure of 'Shakespeare') comes to dominate over the socio-cultural role of students as readers.

A fifth and final approach to teaching English and Shakespeare is that of multimodal pedagogy. In the teaching of Shakespeare, one element of interest is the question of whether it is appropriate to use film adaptations of the plays. In a paper by Julie Gorlewski and Brandon Shoemaker they describe action research in which they taught *Macbeth* to a class, treating each act of the play with one approach out of five which were in turn: close reading, the use of the SparkNotes No Fear Shakespeare 'translation' of the play alongside the original text, use of a graphic novel, use of film and getting students to dramatically perform of the play. The teachers tested the pupils on comprehension of the play and were surprised to find that film was the most successful, with students getting an average of 89% of the test, ten points higher than the what they got after the drama-based teaching. Nevertheless the writers advocate for a mixed approach, saying that that this the following year brought grades on comprehension up to a class average of 90%, saying that, 'We concluded the unit by having a group of students act out two integral scenes from the play. The results on comprehension tests revealed a class average of 90%, indicating

that a combination of approaches might be advantageous.’ (114) On film, the teachers note that:

For purists, the main argument against teaching Shakespeare through film is that directors can drastically change or influence the original text for a variety of agendas. John Golden illustrates the importance of a director's influence by exploring film studies in high school English classrooms. Yet, if the film maintains the original Shakespearean language and plot, students' understanding need not suffer simply because of a director's interpretation; in fact, the director's take can serve as a springboard for discussion after the film. (112)

Similarly, Graham Holderness has criticised those who see film as a threat to the study of literature, citing as an example a GCSE O Level examiner's report that while most candidates in exam halls knew *Macbeth* well, some 'were handicapped by having seen a film version'. (152) However, Holderness goes further, suggesting that film interpretations can be used in the classroom to challenge fixed assumptions about the play, supporting alternative interpretations. Holderness draws attention to Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, arguing that this film offers an interpretation of the play that refuses the kind of universalizing of Macbeth's tragedy that would see his ambition as purely 'some eccentric personality-disorder'. (157) Instead in *Throne of Blood* ambition is seen as 'a central historical contradiction' of the whole of the society, 'a natural extension of the militaristic violence which is both liberated and restrained by the feudal pattern of authority.' (157) Holderness notes that he is not attempting to argue 'that Kurosawa has discovered or expressed the *true meaning* of Shakespeare's play'. Rather he suggests that 'This bastard offspring, the play's *alter ego*, can ... be brought back into conjunction with the text, to liberate some of its more radical possibilities of meaning.' (158) It is particularly crucial to note that many of the 'alternative' modes brought in to teach Shakespeare are ones that traditionalists would be likely to look down upon as threatening to oversimplify the complexity of Shakespeare's drama. While such oversimplification is certainly possible in the classroom, it is equally arguable that traditionalist methods of teaching Shakespeare, as Holderness's example suggests, risk equal oversimplification through a failure to recognize the openness of the text to multiple interpretations, with 'alternative' modes, particularly those that are likely to engage today's young students, such as graphic novels, allowing students to bring their own lives into their study of Shakespeare and English and to find ways in which this study can aid them in their own personal growth.

Conclusion

In this essay I have argued that there is much wrong with the National Curriculum as it is currently formed and that chief among these is a privileging of technical language skills and cultural heritage over personal growth. I have pointed to evidence that suggests that examination-focused education damages creativity in pupils and argued that a return is needed to the values promoted in John Dixon's *Growth Through English*. Four pedagogies of Shakespeare have been examined - those of traditionalism, cultural materialism, reader-response theory and drama-led teaching - and the capacity for each of these to encourage personal growth in pupils has been evaluated, with each having its merits and demerits. I have suggested classroom activities focused on *Macbeth* that would treat the play as a means towards student personal growth, while retaining an engagement with the depth of the language and meaning of the play. It is, however, my strong view that a pedagogy of English based on personal growth should not impose a prescriptive 'self-help' style notion of the individual and their identity that would neatly package individual scenes of the play into didactic lessons about human nature and human emotions. Central to students' development of a personal self-understanding through Shakespeare is of course through an engagement with the plays' characterisations, but again I would encourage a teaching of 'characters' that seeks, as much as possible, to recognize the fluidity of such characterisation, both at once to recognize the alternative ways of interpreting a dramatic 'character', as well as to challenge the limitations of unifying and necessarily simplifying characterisations to recognize the complexity and at times contradictory nature of the human personality. Indeed, as Rex Gibson has noted:

Part of the appeal of studying Shakespeare's characters is the mixed feelings they evoke. ... It is this capacity for defying simplifying, single categorisation that makes Shakespeare's characters so suitable for students' classroom explorations; they are perennially open to fresh portrayal and interpretation. (Gibson, 91)

Thus while the humanism of traditionalists could be of value for developing student enthusiasm in Shakespeare's characters, equally of value could be cultural materialists' anti-humanism that draws attention to the constructed nature of the modern notion of the self and allows for a more 'open' notion of identity. Of worth too are reader-response theory's focus on the individual student's experience, encouraging teachers to follow student knowledge and ability, drama-led theory that can help students in the collaborative construction of meaning and identity through the study of Shakespeare and multi-modal approaches to teaching, with non-traditional modes allowing for 'alternative' interpretations of the texts that may be more capable of engaging

the pupils within a given classroom. Ultimately, it is the hope of this teacher that a return to the personal growth model of learning English will be of value in itself, but will also help to improve all other aspects of the subject.

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Muna Elmi

At Last

Been at war with myself
Now the world is at war with me

Spent innocent years battling between identities
None of which ... approved of me

British by birth,
But have you heard about
The treatment of the windrush pioneers?

Arab by settlement,
But have you heard about
The repatriation for the slave auctioneers?

Somali by lineage,
But have you heard about
The fatal turf war at cornering spheres?

Carrying the burden of displacement,
the trauma of exile,
Shamelessly.

At last,
I can cry out Black Lives Matter
Outrageously.

My commentary

This short poem was inspired by a horrible nightmare I had a few nights ago after watching the “Sitting in Limbo” drama on BBCOne. The anxiousness and frustration over the last week also contributed to this.

In this nightmare, I woke up one morning and the news mentioned the passing of a new law; all Non-English citizens had to return to their homelands

(can't recall the reason but it was somewhat of an ethnic cleanse or a population control) and there were no exceptions. Not whether you were born here or how long you've lived here, nothing. The only determiner was the colour of your skin.

As I waited for the immigration officers to gather all Non-English residents on my street, I sat in the van wondering where I'd class as my 'homeland' and attempted to weight my chances of survival in the Middle East or in Africa (where my parents are originally from). I remember feeling ashamed for not exploring my heritage sooner and how tragic it would be to start life over. Something I now had to implore for, would the Arabs take me? But I'm half "abeed" (slave) to them, a term which is still used today to refer to Nubian Arabs. Or do I stand a better chance with the Somalis accepting me? But the unresolved civil conflict wouldn't let me see the light of day.

Either way, I woke up with a sign of unmatched courage to demand my rights to matter here, where I do belong, to learn about Black history in the UK, to reflect on my power as a new teacher to make this matter far less of an issue for the younger black population.

The nightmare was an awakening and the comfort in knowing that I'm not alone, the BLM movement has done just that.

Welcome to the world where humans will worship you,

Welcome to the world where humans will worship you,

My language journey was a bit of a tug of war situation. My earliest memory of the language rivalry that went on in my home was when me and my siblings would be rewarded for as many items we could translate from English to Somali and then to Arabic. It was fun though, we were told we were 'gifted' and we felt like so.

Mum and dad met in Italy, so, on occasion, they spoke Italian to one another, mainly for privacy because their children had mastered the other possible languages they could use. But this normalised language diversity for me, it was never a unique phenomenon. I assumed everyone could speak more than one language. We also had an uncle who studied in Russia to train for the royal air force who came to visit us in London for the holidays. Some days, my living room could've passed as a UN conference.

Mum tells me I was a curious child, vocal too. I would listen to phone conversations as she spoke to her relatives back home and mumbled under my

breath, practicing words and then putting them in phrases. I would do the same with my dad's conversations, she says. Dad reminds me of the origins of my first word 'Babo' a combination of the Arabic word for dad 'Baba' and the Somali word for dad 'Abo'. Thinking about it now, cognitive conflict was right up my alley.

As I got older, I felt the pressure of being fluently multilingual, I remember feeling the obligation to translate legal documents including council eviction notices and writing to local MP's, even worse sitting at a doctor's office having to tell my grandmother she was just diagnosed with cancer, all as a fourteen-year-old. Expressing to immigrant parents that you had insufficient language proficiency to communicate at that level was daunting. 'Well, what on earth do they teach you in school then' I couldn't afford to hear that again. Meanwhile, I'm in year 9 and we're being taught how to decode Shakespeare's language, nowhere near what was expected of me at home.

This high expectations of language I think actually gave me a kick in the butt, it enhanced my confidence and made me want to read more and interact more. So, here I was roaming the streets of Hackney, East London when I was introduced to *Patois*, a language predominately spoken by the Jamaican diaspora. Unlike the languages I spoke at home (Arabic and Somali) that weren't influenced by any sort of English, *Patios* felt cool, the English understood it and it had African roots, what a hat-trick.

Since then, my language has adapted tremendously, mainly to fit what purpose I was trying to achieve. Developing linguistic flexibility to portray whatever version of myself that I desired was language's gift to me.

Anwen Gardner

Her sky

Even the sky doesn't know what she is.
She's this spectrum of most beautiful hope.
Colours that have no name.
Hues of provocative darkness.

A small glow - a flicker - at the very bottom. Do you see? Just there.
Burning.

Breathing.
Laughing.
Growing.

Gone.

Always too sudden.

It's become her blue. Become her black. Become her dark.
Lost now.

Is that why her dark is such a dark shade of dark? The sky's I mean.
Because it consumed that beautiful light?
Is that the real tragedy here? (Her tragedy?)
That she would have been nothing without it?

There is so much dark. Surrounded.
Three quarters of the gigantic, smothering sky outside my small, square
window.
And night then comes. And all goes dark.

Is it inevitable?
For me? Yes.

But that light is still in there.
Just.
Swallowed whole.
I know it. Just me.

I wish it didn't always have to be so small in this sky of mine.

A tear down my cheek and for what?
The truth remains - I've never seen such a beautiful sky of every colour that's
never had a witness to call it a colour.

So to say she is a confused sky? No. Never.
I mean, yes. Perhaps.
But she knows it.

She's not confused – I'm not either.

About the outcome, that is.

Yes, she has that small, temporary flicker of light.
But she always knows it will become the black. Feed the black.

So, her black is not her true tragedy is it? Her light is.
Of that, I'm sure

Lacey Gregory

Can we dream anymore?

Can we dream anymore?
In a world that's so inverted.
Crystallised on the inside
to grief, indifference and torment.

With each day that rolls by
the same windows, the same walls,
Is our compassion as stifled
as our kinsmen on the floor...

For dreams that once were golden,
Look plastic, a smokescreen, a farce.
Rather than policies to protect us,
It's the hearse that drives us past.

So listen to the crowd's cries.
The echoes of resistance.
That's our dreams awakening.
Anticipating.
A change is gonna come.

Personal Language History.

The necessity of achievement has been engrained on me since childhood and, when first considering the role language has played in my personal growth, I found the prominence of academia strange as no one in my immediate family can be categorised as a stereotypical "high-achiever." However, only after growing up have I come to realise that as the youngest children in my family, I served as a blank canvas wherein my family members could project their alternative ambitions and desires. As the only member of my family to have

graduated from university, my academic success has become a great source of pride for my parents, yet, it is only as I start to reflect on the journey of my linguistic development that I begin to realise how the roots of my existence has come to shape my relationship with language.

This relationship is evident from my first word: mum. Although this is a common first word, for myself and many other 'mum' mutterers, these three letters encapsulate the lasting, impactful bond between mother and child. 'Mum' does not simply mean 'mother' or 'caregiver', rather, when I hear or think or read the word, I see an offering of home, familiarity and clarity. I feel acceptance; patience; generosity and most importantly, the possibility of a love that contradicts the dystopian hostility, ignorance and confusion of modern society. Having said that, my language history did not begin with my first word and its resonance with my mother. Instead, I see my association with my surrounding environments and consequently how I communicate both introspectively and socially as originating from my paternal Grandfather.

Born in the slums of Paisley, Scotland, in the late nineteen-tens, my Grandad taught himself how to read and write so that at the age of fourteen he was able to move to England and pursue a career in the Royal Marines (albeit slightly illegally until he turned eighteen) to provide a better life for himself and his family. After first hearing this story in my adolescence-around the same age my Grandad was when he moved to England on his own- I was overwhelmed with admiration how he did not accept the hand that life had given him and it this steadfast determination that has resonated throughout all of my subsequent actions. In this light I am able to see every new venture as a goal, a chance to better my life, to hurdle every restriction and, like my Grandad, I see the mastery of language as the key to prosperity.

Naturally, there had to be a spark to ignite my love for reading and the unsuspecting fire-starter was my sister. Of course, I was read iconic children's books like *The Hungry Caterpillar* and Roald Dahl's tales, however, during Christmas in 1999 my sister received a copy of *Happy Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and- like most people in my generation- my understanding of the power of imagination and fantasy was completely overturned from the first chapter. At five-years-old I marvelled at the new, peculiar words my sister would read out loud to me as we read the book together, which, looking back, also extenuated my pre-existing love for Dahl. 'Quidditch,' 'snozzcumber,' 'rotsome,' and 'muggle' completed evolved what I thought I understood about language even at a young age. And because I was so young, and unable in many ways to grasp that these worlds were entirely fictional, I struggled (or refused) to accept that there was a distinction between fantasy or reality. Instead, I would run around shouting nonsensical spells at people and pretending that

my mum's kitchen broom could out-fly everyone. Growing up in the New Forest also allowed my imagination to run wild, with werewolves lurking behind trees ready to eat me during a full moon, or the tree themselves would come to life whenever you weren't looking... To this day I still admire Rowling's rebellion against the norms of language and gift she has given thousands of children, to see beyond what is real and to connect readers with the majesty of their surroundings because there is no right or wrong regarding how one truly wants to see their world.

While my love of reading has clearly had a great influence over my approach to language, it was not my first love. For me, music-or my enjoyment of music-has formed my earliest memories and played a vital role in the development of my language. From ages two to four I lived in Spain and in the early years of linguistic development, I did not fluently speak Spanish or English- rather, I merely acquired basic words and phrases in both languages. Instead music provided an opportunity to become familiar with words that otherwise I wouldn't have been exposed to in the bi-lingual environment I was growing up in. By the age of three I could sing Supergrass' 'Alright' and Ricky Martin's 'Livin' La Vida Loca' without any prompts, and although these songs may not be the most appropriate for a three year old to be singing by the pool, in the local market and at karaoke, learning the lyrics helped me to approach English and Spanish confidently while I was still at an age where I didn't have any inhibitions.

When I came back to my hometown of Southampton I managed to catch up with learning English relatively quickly before I started school, however, this also meant that I acquired the charming, yet rather inarticulate Southern accent: think of it as a water-down West Country accents wherein 'r's are prominently extenuated while words such as 'south' turn in to 'sav'. According to fellow "sotoners" (Southampton natives) our city is Saaavamton rather than Southampton. However, it was only in my later years of secondary education that I became conscious of my accent because at that time I had extraordinarily high ambitions to pursue a career in law and become a member of the Queen's Counsel, a profession that relies heavily on diction in order to put forth the more articulate argument. In light of this I trained myself to speak clearly, enunciate and place less stress on 'r's so that eventually that way I spoke became more neutral and blended in more with the expectations of "Proper English."

Having said that, it was only after moving to London in my early twenties that my "Southern-ness" was once again apparent when I learnt that certain dialects are specific to my hometown. In Southampton, the word 'mush' (as well as some other parts of the South Coast) just as 'mate,' 'buddy,' or 'pal' is used across the rest of the country. 'Mush' is derivative from an old Romany

word for 'my good friend' and has upheld its meaning for many years, however, when I called a friend *mush* after moving to London, the response was a look of confusion bordering on insult as they were unsure if I was being friendly or rude. Nevertheless, I haven't stopped using the term since moving to London, in fact I probably use it more often now I take pride in my dialect and often regret losing my original accent.

The most significant turning point in my linguistic evolution was studying American Literature. The novels, autobiographies, diaries and essays that I read throughout my degree completely transformed the way I think about social, psychological and cultural development on a global scale as opposed to the more sheltered and naïve views that I upheld before. Seventeenth-century sermons, slave narratives and the dystopia of the Southern Gothic illustrated how deeply ingrained beliefs and national torment was able to develop a nation's language into a national voice to tell their stories. I became fascinated with the everyman as I came to appreciate the cultural significance of every person who told their story whether preacher or pauper. It is from this stance that my inspiration to teach students about how to develop their own world views by putting pen to paper, enabling them to recognise the importance of celebrating and encouraging the liberation from the intensity of the global climate by writing personal, intimate stories and storytelling their own histories, ambitions and unleashing their imaginations just as I have.

Sumaya Hassan-Adde

Woman in Black – The Nightmare of Arthur Kipps

☹️ The purity of life and destroying the joys for the future. Why is she doing this? What does she want? She wants to create destruction, she wants to impart her malevolence onto the world, so we can all feel her pain and her misery. The sounds of the weeping, screaming, wailing child echoes in the darkness, guttering for air as it drowns in the marshes and I am drowning in its pain.

My Dream - Happy

My dream is to be wholly and blissfully happy.
A feeling that brightens the soulless,
A feeling that I yearn for,
A feeling that is denied to so many.

My dream is to have the freedom to be happy.
To forget the way the world is,
To forget the oppression,
To forget what suffocates happiness.

My Personal Language History

As a diaspora, my journey to language has been the integration of two diverse cultures and wondering whether one would overpower the other. Being born as a Somali in England, my siblings and I struggled to acknowledge ourselves as real Somali's because we couldn't speak our language well but also that we weren't fully British because of our faith and our culture, we were different to others. It was only after this struggle and the continuous internal debates that we created our own title and accepted ourselves as British Somali. We decided to pick and choose which values we respected and liked from both cultures. It was only during our childhood, without much schooling or influence from school friends or neighbours, that we enjoyed and loved our Somali culture. My parent's limited knowledge of the English language was not detrimental to my learning or my progression of English, it highlighted the

strength and excitement of storytelling in my home language. From an early age, the memory that survives and remains from my childhood were my bedtime stories. My father would gather my siblings and I, we would all huddle together under the duvet and await eagerly for my father to begin narrating a story.

Somali Folktale

These stories are not only rich in culture and content but in the method of narrating these tales, that have been passed down from generation to generation. The characters in these stories were mostly animals and some unknown mythical creatures, used to either scare children or teach a moral lesson. The animals were used to represent unacceptable behaviours or characteristics of people. For example the hyena or the fox are usually identified as the villains in most of the stories – the fox presents cunning and devious behaviours and the hyena is portrayed as a coward who lacks intellect and the comedy, in some of the stories, occurs when he foolishly gets himself into trouble. Despite the comedic value of these stories, most of them provided a moral lesson for the listener; a simple lesson for children and young people to understand. For example, this is a translated folktale:

(Once upon a time) a blind ewe (lax indhala') fell behind the rest of her flock. She wandered into a deserted place and was grazing there alone, when suddenly, she was spotted by a hyena. He decided to eat her and began to stealthily creep towards her. Hearing a rustle, the ewe was delighted, "My flock is coming!" she thought excitedly and ran towards the hyena. The hyena became frightened and fled. "Life is precious!" he said "it is better to keep off a ewe who throws herself upon hyenas!"

Additionally, the other stories recounted to us were religious and historical stories of the Prophets of Islam. Through these narrations, my father enhanced a love for our religion and educated us on the pious actions and attitudes of these significant men. The most prominent aspect of these spoken stories and the reason why they were inspiring was due to the way my father told them; his voice, the intonation, the pauses, the structure of the plot, the body and facial expressions and the terminology were all necessary in gaining the attention of toddlers and young children. To quote Caroline Bristow, "storytelling is an art form, that requires the performing and communicating a plot whilst engaging with the listeners". This captured my appreciation for stories, and I began my reading journey with a variety of tales; from Japanese Manga, to historical princess stories. There was one reading picture book that I wrote when I was young, it is the only living item from my Primary years that my parents saved. I was grateful, with 7 children and the difficulty transitioning

into a new country, a new culture and new system, it was tough to keep school work. Seeing the picture book of Boudicca, a Celtic Queen, and reading her story, it made me realise now that my fascination and connection with the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy began with this instrumental person. This powerful woman's ability to lead a revolt against the Roman Empire, a Kingdom feared by many and known for their might and power, highlighted her influence and strength to protect her people from her enemies.



Furthermore, despite never going to Somalia, these folktales gave my siblings and I an insight into our culture and taught us our language whilst educating us on our religion and the moral behaviours valued by our people. Hence, this ignited an appreciation for the Somali culture, at a time when I was feeling insecure with my identity. This understanding enabled me to differentiate the language I learnt at school with my home language.

My mother is the most special person in my life, she taught me so many things in life and through her guidance and compassion, she taught my siblings and I our home language, Somali. As a refugee and someone who was unable to study or learn English from an institute, she had very limited knowledge of the English Language but she taught me Somali as much as she could through conversations and discussions. However, as I began school, my English speaking progressed, and this went unnoticed by my parents. Due to our preference to speak English, my father banned all of us from speaking it at home, to ensure that we didn't forget Somali. At the time, I viewed the ban as a hinderance to my learning and in order to combat against this, we spoke in secret in the safety of our bedrooms. My father knew we were talking in English but his intention was to ensure that we never forgot our language and in essence our culture; who we are, which to him was Somali. Hence, we arrived with a compromise, we, subconsciously or consciously,

started switching some difficult Somali words to English when we spoke at home. Thus, the act of codeswitching began. Of course, at the time we weren't aware there was a label for this way of conversing, but it became a normality for us; when speaking to each other, other young Somali's our age and to our parents, who despite having difficulty understanding most English words, were still able to understand us because of the context we were speaking on or the other Somali words we used in the sentence. However, as I became older, I began to rely on this method, it was a comfort for me specifically because as a person who stammers, I would switch the words that I had difficulty pronouncing in English to Somali and vice versa.

To conclude, I enjoyed my beginning steps to learning language, as a bilingual speaker, but now in hindsight I hoped I would have cherished those moment of learning Somali and place more focus and emphasis on speaking it properly as now I'm not as fluent in the language as I would hope to be. I weighted it lower than English and that is my regret. As a mother, I hope to instil a love and importance of both languages to my children and give them more opportunities to learn and speak Somali, so that they can one day tell Somali folktale to their own children.

Mahasen Jannah

A Dream Capture

work.

A



Part 1: Dreams and Nightmares

Mother's Hope

Travelling on an empty belly,
Seeking a place of sweet refuge,

Trusting her instincts and
welcoming her new princess.

Majestically licking her babe clean,
Gliding its trunk across its body,
A mothers' loving touch,
That screams nothing but safety.

'Welcome to the world my sweet Mombasi,
Welcome to the land which your children will roam,
Welcome to the world where you are a god,

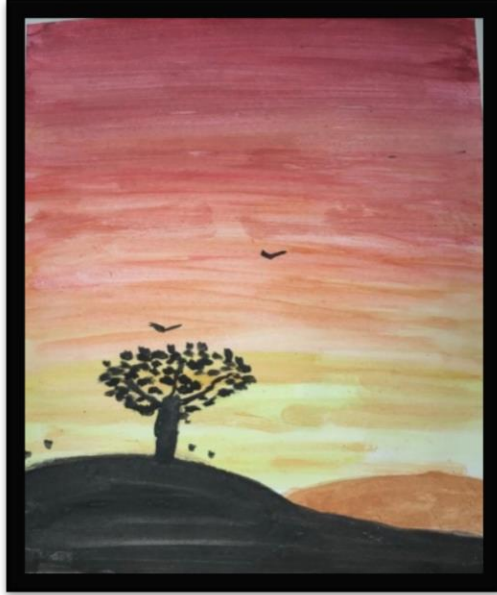
Welcome to the
world where humans
will worship you,

Welcome to the
world who will hunt
you down for your
white jewels,

Welcome to the
world that will
always desire a piece
of you in their
possessions,

Welcome to the
world that will
capture and lock you
up,

Welcome to the
world that will take
you away from me.



But I won't let it happen,
You're mine, and I'm yours to keep,
I hope one day you will lead a life,
That will be full of love; ocean deep'.



J A B B E R W O C K

The jungle was empty to the unseen eye, but to all those who wondered about under the watchful luminous face in the sky, it was far from being empty. Belly's rumbled and grumbled as they searched the heavy dense jungle for their next meal. The orb lit the way for the hunters to observe and mutilate their dinner. A family of snakes dispersed in many directions, coiling up to find something they can slowly endeavour.

The jungle was in an island, away from the two-legged species who would've hunted the inhabitants down for potions and medicine. However, it didn't stop those who were the most curious. Many have arrived but were unable to leave. Their untimely death was inevitable. Every step there would be contact with a new species of snake...spider...anything that'll make your insides squirm. You see, these inhabitants wait for days they have fresh visitors. They put on a very dangerous show.

In this island there lives a giant. A giant so big it makes the sasquatch and lockness monster seem like nothing but mere folktales and myths. This giant towered the tops of the rustling trees that swayed with the wind, that slept with the sun and that cried with the rain.

There's no name for such a beast because it's one of the mysteries that these two-legged humans haven't discovered, captured, tested, categorised and labelled.

Its mouth is enormous enough to take two mammoth bites of a great white and finish it off in a single sitting. If the mouth was big, the eyes, the stomach and the hunger was twice as bigger. You'd think it would've resembled king Kong or Godzilla from the way it is described; a great monstrosity. But it's almost liked a hybrid version of all things to of shook the earth. It lurks around, crushing anything with a heartbeat with its chizzled, leech like mouth; sucking every drop of life out of the poor souls it captures, leaving no form of its existence in sight.

The beast is such a creature that no-one could imagine, only the subconscious can bring it to life.

It lets out a spine curdling howl, distorted between a wolfs howl and static on the radio. Snakes use heat to sense it pray, sharks hunt their prey down using movement. This? Let's just say it has almost a sixth sense that would lead YOU to IT. Not IT to YOU.

The inhabitants of the jungle, his and roar every night, in rhythm to the wind, the rustling of the leaves... warning whoever comes in its path...

Beware the Jabberwock...my son!

The jaws that bite...

the claws that catch...

Beware the Jubjub thing...

And SHUN

The fruminous Bandersnatch.

Mahasen Jannah's Personal Language History.

My language history is influenced by Bengali words as well as English. I consider myself to fall into the EAL category as English isn't my first language. However, to some extent to say the least, as from birth I was taught a mixture from different family members.

I remember my parents, uncles and aunties implemented English as well as promoted reading and writing in English and English conversations with me and my siblings. Whereas my older family members, like my grandparents whom I lived with, I would learn and socialise with them in Bengali. Some may say it was the best of both worlds.

However, I realised this may be quite difficult and confusing for a child growing up. I believe I favoured English more as opposed to Bengali; only because I was able to practice more English with school and friends and that's what made me more confident. Which is probably why I blend English in with my Bengali when I struggle to talk in Bengali.

I'm going to start with the nouns in my language memory bank. The first term I want to introduce is 'Abu'. Mum/Dad is the cliché to choose when it comes to talking about the people you love and cherish the most. However, the term 'Abu' derives from south Asian culture, it initially means 'Dad', but it's not the only term for 'dad' there are quite a few names out there. To me and my sisters, there was always a mix of 'Abba' and 'Abu'.

I think about 'Abu' and instantly feel a warm grey blanket wrap over me with a warm touch on my skin. I'm safe, I'm guarded, and I know 'Abu' is my protector. I say 'Abu' and my stomach is instantly full, from him making sure I finish off all my dinner. I can smell dad's breath and his cigarettes lingering onto his shirt. In our old house, in the middle of the night 'Abu' would be on his desk working on his computer and I'd be in bed with my siblings facing him. He'd then draw a letter with his lit-up fag in the dark and I'd guess what letter he drew. When I think of 'Abu', I think of my lion.



'Abu' associates to so many things in this world. So many sentimental things a daughter will see her father as. Some materialistic things like cars, food, and shopping. Some feelings of safety, happiness, and laughter.

When participating in a mindfulness activity in class, we thought of someone we hold dear to us, and this is another person who has influenced my language history would be my grandmother whom I call 'Bubu', my Abu's mother. 'Bubu' means 'sister' from an older Bengali root. It's never been the norm for a grandmother to be called 'Bubu' it is traditional 'Dadi', but for everyone in my generation, it will always be 'Bubu'. I can see 'Bubu' holding the family together. She's homely, loving and nurturing. I've has a conversation with my parents and uncles who recalled my first world to of been 'Bubu'. Nouns linked with 'Bubu' for me are words like a beetle nut, toothpick, prayer, sweets.

'Nicknames'.

'MJ' is a name given to me as people always struggled to pronounce my name. so, this name was created by my manager and it latched on to everyone around me, as well as people I just meet now. I introduce myself as Mahasen and then add on I go by as MJ as its easier to remember.

However, over the past year, I've identified me more as 'MJ' as mentioned above simply because it was easier to remember and pronounce in comparison to Mahasen. I do prefer being called Mahasen as it's a name I'm quite prideful of and because of the meaning behind it. I do get fascinated responses to the origins of the name which makes great conversation. It also shows that an individual has taken time out to remember me as Mahasen. So, it is appreciated but if they can't remember I don't mind being referred to as 'MJ'.

I learned how to communicate by starting as a very confident person at home. My parents told me that nothing was ever silly for me to ask. I used to say 'the sky is falling' when it started to rain. So being able to say things that may come off as silly to others is accepted because I was young and still learning about the world around me.

When I was in school, I recall feeling very shy and scared. I didn't want to communicate with the teacher or peers with the fear of being labelled dumb and slow. I grew out of that thinking as years went on.

When living with siblings that don't listen to what you have to say, I'd have to shout my words into existence. However, we used to talk over one another a lot especially when it came to fight. In Bengali culture and one would say its general etiquette it's a form of disrespect to talk over someone and to ensure a person has finished talking before another start. As we grew, we were instilled with always listening, wait and then talk. That's how I developed my listening skills.

EAL Students:

I have acknowledged that EAL learners, for example, may find it difficult to communicate as they might find it difficult to ask for clarification or help. So, a way to communicate for an EAL student and as a trainee teacher, I'd suggest group work and a buddy who'd also be a good help to show/guide the student to understanding. As EAL students become more confident with communicating that's when they'd be able to express themselves with peers and members of staff.

Some people may feel excited to come into a new environment i.e. schools. I know when going back home to Bangladesh I have cousins that want to come to the UK to study. However, some have stated that even though they are excited they're also scared of how overwhelming it can be to be, in an alien environment. Also, when a new person doesn't know how to behave or communicate with others, they may distance themselves away because they don't know what else to do. However, that being said once people do begin to integrate with society, they can feel joy and a sense of belonging grows within them. It also can be seen as a form of accomplishment. For example, when my auntie took her citizenship exam, when she passed, she felt so proud and everyone was so pleased for her.

Esther Jones

Dreaming in a Nightmare

This haibun is a reimagining of my childhood experience of walking home from school, inspired by my favourite part of Spain, the Black Lives Matter Movement and my favourite author James Baldwin. I want those reading this to understand what some of our students, our friends, those we know, experience daily and to continue educating students with empathy and love.

The estate blocks are burnt terra cotta under the sun. They remind me of Spain – Estepona. Pine disinfectant wafts down the street and burns my nostrils; my mother is washing the floors. Behind the park that sprawls opposite my house is an asylum. My friend’s brother jumped over the wall the other day. As I walk home a police car skids around the corner. Leaving me breathless. Leaving me trembling from fear. Did they not see me, in my school uniform, with a Freddo melting between my thumb and index finger?

The road goes silent
A rat hobbles across the
Road. Will it make it home safe?

For more on how to construct a haibun, watch Malika Booker’s creative writing tutorial on First Story’s YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSGS9KDCOyo&t=2s>

Personal Language History

There are many things that Jamaican and Northern Irish people have in common, in particular, their heavy use of hyperboles. This is why I believe they are such great storytellers. Sadly, people often misunderstand Jamaican people, especially those who still hold on fiercely to their accent. It is similar to how Nigerian people are sometimes thought to be angry with one another, when really it’s just because Nigerian languages such as Yoruba and Igbo require more bass in the voice. I like to think this is why so many Jamaicans have strong tonal command, because they’ve inherited it from their ancestors who were largely Yoruba. Also, Jamaican culture’s deeply-rooted connection to the African oral tradition means that the tonal ups and downs of the patois language can feel like a full immersion into the events and experiences of any story or character, even if a person’s just telling you what they were up to yesterday. Similarly, when listening to Northern Irish people speak it can sound like they have their own language of hyperbolic phrases. This could be why it didn’t take me very long to climatise to sayings such as “you’re a geeg” or “you’re taking the Michael!” which to some would sound like insults but really they are just being used to emphasis that person’s point.

Furthermore, whilst patois and ‘broken Gaelic’ were spoken a lot by others during my upbringing, I have never actually verbally used either of these dialects. There was often a lot of conscious and subconscious pressure on me growing up to speak Standard English. So rather than code-switch between the three, I just stuck to what I’d been told was the ‘formal’ way of speaking. This,

however, does not stop me thinking in patois or in my mind using Irish phrases, but it is an area of contention for me. Whilst being able to speak Standard English - with a fairly standardised English accent - has many a time put me in a position of privilege, it has also put me in a position of disadvantage in the areas of my life that matter most. Growing up, my mixed heritage Jamaican and English cousins would call me a 'coconut' for not being able to convincingly put on a Jamaican accent. My peers, especially my Black classmates, would taunt me for 'sounding too White'. Although I now know that these comments came from a place of systemic marginalisation and oppression, it could at times be incredibly difficult to communicate with other Black people who I feared would judge me for not being 'Black enough'. This unease around language and race has somewhat subsided since becoming an adult, but it still taunts me. Luckily, now I have grown into myself more, I have realised that one of the key things to being able to communicate well with anyone is confidence. People are often quick to judge a person when they can hear a person's discomfort with language, but once you develop your own tonality and command of language, it is much more difficult for people to pick apart what they might perceive to be a hole in your verbal tapestry. Nowadays, I see myself as an 'absorber' of spoken languages as opposed to a 'utiliser'. This is not necessarily a passive position, but more of a reflective and consummative one.

Over the past few years, I have grown a strong dislike of abbreviated names, especially when they're abbreviated to one syllable or letter. It was not possible to shorten Muhammad to Mo (nor would it have suited such a knowledgeable person). Come to think of it, none of my close friends have names that can be abbreviated. I just prefer names that require full pronunciation of all their syllables. It is as if the one syllable is not enough for me. Maybe my dislike of abbreviated names comes from a fear of not having enough language. Who knows. For instance, I once heard my sister's dad call her 'Jam' - which is short for 'Jamika'. I remember that I could not stop thinking 'what did he just say?!'. I was furious that he had done such a thing; to shorten my sister's name was just downright unacceptable (as according to my overly self-righteous 15-year-old mind). Almost immediately after this incident, I told him that I'd prefer him to call Jamika by her full name and he just laughed and said that I was "too serious", something those around me have often said.

The concrete noun 'mum' has for the last nine years been very difficult for me to say or think of. Just before my mum died another person who was a mum and like a mum - but not my mum - started looking after me and my sister. Her name was Geraldine. Even after my mum died, I couldn't call Geraldine 'mum' because even though I loved her deeply - and still do - she was everything my mother wasn't. She was White. Northern Irish. Catholic. And

middle-class (although she'll fight you on that one). No joke, when I first met Geraldine and her family it was like being a block of ice thrown into hot water. Now, I had been around White people and my stepfather was good friends with an Irish man round the corner from our house on mum's estate, but lawd me never see such a ting in mi life!

When my sister and I sat down to have dinner for the first time in Geraldine's home we had a roast dinner – it had been ages since we had had a roast dinner. It was one of the strangest experiences I had ever had. We were sitting in a grand old house, with people who it seemed operated differently to us, having a roast dinner our mum might have made us. Roast dinners, for me, seem to be one of a few dishes that anyone from any culture could eat and enjoy. It is such a simple dish yet has so many variations it can be made to fit whatever a person may fancy... I digress. Let's just say it was a madness! We had been to two other foster carers in less than a year before that and were only meant to stay with Geraldine and her family for two weeks, but ended up staying on the basis of the delicious roast dinners (amongst other things – ha!).

For many years I was in a predicament about calling Geraldine 'mum' because I still love my birth mother very much, but now I simply refer to Geraldine as my mum when speaking to people who haven't met her, and when they do meet her, I tell them her name.

The adjective 'wee' or rather the phrase 'wee girl' when I first heard it confused me to no end and now I know it as a term of endearment. It was when I first moved to Geraldine's house and she called me and my sister 'wee girls'. It was another oddity about moving from different foster carers. Our previous carer had been a privately educated British-Nigerian who was too strict and who rarely spoke to us unless necessary. So when Geraldine started referring to us as her "wee girls" to everyone we met they were initially met by a bafflement that sometimes mirrored their own if they were unfamiliar with the sightings of an older White woman with two Black girls. It especially did not help that it was a word associated with urinating. Eventually, we started to "catch on" as Geraldine would say, after I had asked her if "wee" was an Irish word, to which she said it meant "small". Now, even though I understood what the word now meant I still was a little uncomfortable with her calling me wee when we were in public. I have never been and will never be 'wee'. All my life I have been big, I was a big child and now I'm an even bigger adult. Later, my discomfort changed to adoration when Geraldine stormed over to her friend's house to warn their son about the negative effects of bullying others. This was after I had told her about incidents at school where he and his friends had repeatedly referred to me as "Didier Drogba" in reference to my apparent facial similarities to the footballer. Although this bullying was not in reference

to my size it did affect how I perceived myself. I had not asked Geraldine to say anything, but just to be a listening ear, but just like how my mum would have reacted she couldn't let this stand and felt the need to do something. Since then I have felt happy to be called Geraldine's "wee girl", even when I wasn't wee and definitely wasn't wee compared to Geraldine who has always been smaller than me (even when I first met her).

Josh Johnson

The First Day Back

Bustling playgrounds,
The sound of chatter,
Fresh school uniform,
The first day back in September.

New pencil cases,
And new school shoes,
Six months out of practice,
Can we all remember how to do it?

Two metres distance,
A brand new school rule.
But it allows us all to come back together,
In our strange, brand new normal.

New books to discover,
Sums to calculate.
New experiments to demonstrate,
History now more important than ever.

We've all missed each other,
During this bizarre time,
But I've kept on dreaming
Of this day at the start of September.

Because schools aren't supposed to be
Empty for this long.

So welcome, I'm your brand new teacher
And I'll be taking you for this new school year.

So please do come in and take a seat,
Because I've been dreaming of this moment,
Of saying that for so long,
And after these last six months

Saying it will feel better than
I ever thought it would or could.

Kayla MacQuarrie

A personal history of two Concrete Nouns and change

The focus of this part of my personal language history was concrete nouns. Specifically I explored my changing associations with two concrete names. This changed relationship with language reflects a changing relationship with associated concepts and people; in this instance gender and different father figures. It's interesting how these supposedly concrete nouns are still shot through with associations that are ever so flexible.

Dad

Dad is a somewhat fraught noun, one that I've gone on a journey with. My birth father left when I was very young so for my early life the noun dad perhaps conjured images of absence.

My step father came into my life shortly after. My relationship with the nouns I've called my stepfather has evolved as I've grown up. When I was young I tended to just refer to him by his name.

As I grew older I became comfortable regarding him as my father but struggled with the noun Dad in direct address, probably owing to abandonment issues caused by my birth father. I split the difference and would refer to him to others as "my dad" but mainly avoided using either his name or Dad in conversation.

From this point on the habit of referring to him as "my dad" to others softened me to directly addressing him as Dad. I now do so and regard him as my "real" father and thinking about the noun Dad brings to mind choice and agency.



Being a trans woman in 2015 I changed my name from that given to me at birth to the one I go by (I have redacted my birth name for privacy reasons). Being many years removed from this change I now rarely encounter the name *****. As it relates to me I tend to only see it in old hidden records (registering for uni this term has meant trawling through lots of old records). The reminder of this change perhaps adds an artificial sense of distance to the recent past, events more than five years ago feel like a lifetime ago.

The name ***** is not particularly common which means I do not come across it much. When I do I suppose I regard it with a bit of suspicion, it feels like an unpleasant reminder.

On pronouns and
sentence structure.

On class and consent.

This section of the Personal Language History tracks a personal relationship to the second person singular pronoun and the relationship it has had to my class status and also contains musings on sentence structure, emotional honesty and consent.

Yous

I do not remember when I first learned that second person plural and singular were both you. I recall when I was Primary/early Secondary school age me and many others where I grew up (Essex) tended to use “Yous” as a second person plural. I recall we knew it was not Standard English but I suspect if you asked us what the Standard English was we would have struggled to answer.

Thinking about second person pronouns often brings up complicated feelings around my own relationship to class. I’m unsure how I feel about the fact that when I was younger me and my friends had an audible distinction between singular and plural which we unlearned in the interest of being seen as using “Proper” English.

(This likely reflects feeling about my accent; which is not particularly placeable to Essex)

**SIMPLE SENTENCES
I LOVE YOU.
I DON'T LIKE IT.
I WANT THIS.**

It occurs to me that at a certain point we are encouraged to communicate with more complex sentences, and I wonder if this ignores how meaningful simple sentences are. Simple sentences are complete sentences. “I don’t like it” can and should be enough to encourage change.

On spoken language, class and autism.

From what I recall I imagine my early learning in communication was probably stunted by various factors. An undiagnosed learning disability for one and moving from the Midlands to Essex when I was around 8 as another factor. Before I had learned good communication skills with people I was comfortable with I had to switch to meeting new people and learning the right tempo of communication all over again.

My accent nowadays is somewhat difficult to place. It is rarely guessed at a region more specific than “somewhere in the south of England”. This implacableness perhaps makes me read as more middle class than I am, something I have very conflicted feelings about. Have I abandoned my roots? Is this accent, and perhaps many other class signifiers, something I began to affect at some point?

I definitely feel the language and vocabulary I acquired as I grew older was affected by being autistic. There’s a preciseness to my idiolect with I sometimes notice in other autistic people and I know did not come from either my parents or my schooling environment.

A personal history of reading, writing, burning out and quitting.

As best as I can remember I learned to spell by phonics. I think I was regarded as a good speller though I had to take spelling/reading tests much later than other children (I don't remember what explanation was provided to me though I suspect whatever it was wouldn't have been the entire truth).

Near the end of Year 6 I was a very thorough reader. My classroom had a table full of books and you could take one home at a time, read it then take something else out. I don't remember everything I read during that time, just stray flashes of plot or character (a time travel story involving an advent calendar?).

I definitely read less outside of assigned texts once I started Secondary School. I tended to only reading school holidays. My birthday was in June which meant I'd often gets books for Christmas, read them over the Christmas holidays, not reading during the school term then get books for my birthday which I would read in the summer holidays.

In recent years I've struggled with readings prose for reasons that I find difficult to explain. Perhaps it is related to feeling burned out after the pressure of undergrad. Perhaps a gradual loss of focus because of various life factors. I've began to account for this by reading more illustrated and graphic novels and to deal with all of the reading on this course I've purchased a Listening Books subscription.

I used to want to be a writer. I was an imaginative child, constantly playing in my garden alone in worlds of complete fantasy. I wrote story ideas and summaries on my family computer by myself. I worked on ideas for comic books or web series with friends. I attempted script writing. I never finished anything.

I suspect that's a big reason why I regard writing more as a thing I used to do. From 2017 onwards I began to produce stand-up. I found these short bursts of writing much more completable and also enjoyed speaking from personal experience. However I will often refute the idea that this is writing, it's mainly constructed in notes form and then kept in my head and is never shown in writing form.

I suspect this refusal is also a way of not connecting too much to the writing I used to do, lest I regard my move away from it and into other creative fields I found more manageable to be a state of failure.

Katrina Maxted

From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

"There were no horses to be procured, and I must return by the lake; but the wind was unfavourable, and the rain fell in torrents. However, it was hardly morning, and I might reasonably hope to arrive by night. I hired men to row and took an oar myself, for I had always experienced relief from mental torment in bodily exercise. But the overflowing misery I now felt, and the excess of agitation that I endured rendered me incapable of any exertion. I threw down the oar, and leaning my head upon my hands, gave way to every gloomy idea that arose. If I looked up, I saw scenes which were familiar to me in my happier time and which I had contemplated but the day before in the company of her who was now but a shadow and a recollection. Tears streamed from my eyes. The rain had ceased for a moment, and I saw the fish play in the waters as they had done a few hours before; they had then been observed by Elizabeth. Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change. The sun might shine or the clouds might lower, but nothing could appear to me as it had done the day before. A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness; no creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man." *Frankenstein* Chapter 23

The consequence of dreams.

Nothing about the night was favourable, not the wind nor the rain
but rowing helped me numb the pain.
I had always experienced relief from mental torment in bodily exercise.
However, even that had its limits.

I remember throwing away the ore, crying out in vain.
Everywhere I looked only heightened the pain.
If I looked up, I saw scenes which were familiar to me in my happier time
of her who was now but a shadow and a recollection.

The sun might shine or the clouds might lower,
but nothing could appear to me as it had done the day before.
A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness,
Or had I? No, I cannot fathom it even if I try.
For nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.

Commentary

This poem is based off an exercise I did with a top set year 9 class, around the theme of good and evil. They were given a choice of five passages to choose from and then from the passage of their choice, create a poem from the perspective of either Victor or The Creature. The only rules were that each stanza had to include a quotation from the passage, and the poem's viewpoint had to fit the passages context in relation to the rest of the novel and the theme of good and evil, which we had been working towards.

The poem explores how Victor's dream to create life, turned out to be his perpetual nightmare. However, it also explores how Victor is unable to take responsibility for his actions, deeming himself the victim of circumstance when in actuality his 'dream' orchestrated all the events that followed. Using the idea of dreams and nightmares as a starting point to explore the theme of good and evil, is one that can be seen throughout the novel. For example, when Walton pesters Victor for the secrets to creating life; despite the nightmares told to him by Victor he still holds that dream-like curiosity once expressed by the protagonist.

This was a task I set once we had finished the novel and scheme of work. It gave the students a chance to explore the concept of the doppelganger and do close textual analysis in a creative way, which I also found useful as a tool to strengthen their AO1 and AO3 skills. It is important to let students know that they are not just creating a poem entirely from quotes, but instead using select quotes from the passage like evidence to support their own creative responses and interpretations.

Jubel Miah

Romeo's Nightmare

A consequence yet hanging in the stars
Tells itself in hazy light. Blurry and murky,
It unravels a complex weave.

A love so powerful it calls pilgrims to prayer
And moves with such reckless force, it knows no name.
No Montague, nor no other.

She moves at lighting speed through mansions, orchards
And before God.

Cupid's fiery arrows fuel an intense desire,
destined for letters in stone. A forced hand
drives the dagger deep, that twists the course of this love
- O, I am fortune's fool!

A love now distant and far from reach, separated by the stars.
Only potions and poisons bring us closer,
but leave us dead to the touch.

My commentary

As I am currently teaching a year 9 class Romeo and Juliet, I thought that it was only fitting that I explore Romeo's nightmare in this poem. The poem builds and expands on the premonition that Romeo mentions before he attends the ball at the Capulet mansion. This could just as easily work as a classroom activity, as a creative response to the text, in which students could explore Romeo's dreams and fears at this point in the play. It's a useful exercise for students to develop their understanding of the play, as well as potentially exploring Romeo's feelings and emotions.

My approach to writing the poem involved mind mapping key events from the play and jotting down words and ideas that expanded on these. Students can develop this further by including ideas or quotes from the play.

Kate Michaelis

Lockdown (version 1)

I thread the needle, weave a few links
Until it winds through the other side.
A mopped floor but footprints
Make it endless.
Dust nesting in every nook and cranny,
Sitting on a mirror waiting to be seen.

Clouds like fairy palaces each evening. Were they always there?
I make myself a cup of tea, its steam dancing
I take some time to reflect
And pause.
Weaving a parachute for another time

Lockdown (version 2)

You thread the needle, stitch a few links
Until it winds through the other side.
A mopped floor but footprints
Make it endless.
Up-to-date on the news and Whatsapp,
Although never really.

Clouds like fairy palaces each evening. Were they always there?
Pick up the phone to a faraway voice,
Reaching out for their words, their heart

Since I was a teenager, I can recall my dad proudly proclaiming me as well read - this only served to add to my precociousness. Heavily influenced by my dad, I was making my way through the classics and a lot of the Russian greats from about the age of 14. I remember taking *Anna Karenina* out of the school library, it not having been borrowed for years, the librarian in such a state of excitement at my choosing this: "Oh, you're going to LOVE this book!"

Make a cup of tea, its steam dancing

And sipping it, slowly, pausing, reflecting.

Weaving a parachute for another time

Sewn with intention, and appreciation, for when life feels full-time

Personal Language History.

I realised from a very young age that to interact and socialise with people, something I was desperate to do, you had to be able to talk. I quickly picked up the language I needed to enable me to speak and form sentences. Little Miss Chatterbox and Motor-Mouth were names regularly used to describe me. Aged 2 I had told people I was a vet and aged 3 I was talking to people about the business I had. I was a 'South African' and I had 4 sisters. I happily lied my way through my early years, communicating as much as I could. I had learned to speak but words meant nothing to me, the content was rubbish. Communication and my relationships with other people was my first focus when it came to language and it still stands true today. Ever since I was little, I have had lengthy phone calls from my bedroom to best friends. I spend hours with my mum and dad at any opportunity, discussing and analysing anything and everything. I send notes, cards and letters to close friends and relatives whenever I can. I still live to communicate with people, although nowadays I hopefully make a bit more sense!

When it comes to books, I begged my parents to read My Frumble's worst day ever with me every single night. I then fell in love with Amazing Grace and, like the true 90s kid I am, I reached the intellectual heights of Jaqueline Wilson. I was gripped by When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit, the first 'proper' book I read; I began to experience books affecting my emotions. I vividly remember sitting in the garden one school summer holiday, sobbing my way through A Kite Runner, trying to hide my face from my next door neighbours' house who was in my class at school. I find language and stories in books incredibly moving, triggering emotion within me. This is also true for music and lyrics which give me a release, support and huge amounts of pleasure.

I have had a sense of being judged by how I use language throughout my life. When I began getting assessed on my ability to use language in school, I started to question my use of language and this ability and I began to feel inhibited. My mum is from Yorkshire and my dad is North London Jewish. That, combined with my local, Warwickshire schooling meant I had a fairly neutral, Midlands accent growing up. I used "flat" vowels for bath and glass and pronounced 'was' as 'wuz'. When I started at university I was judged for this;

Manchester friends called me posh and Southerners called me Northern. I was criticised and told I was saying things wrong. I became conscious of my accent and the words I chose to use. People's comments affected my language use and this had a knock on effect. I felt nervous when demonstrating a point in a group and I became shy around certain people, groups and situations as I was worried that if I didn't have the right structures or words, they would notice and I would look stupid. I didn't experience this when speaking to family or old friends but only recently have I felt comfortable again with my accent and vocabulary.

I feel more of a bond with my Huddersfield roots than my London roots. I am very fond of Yorkshire and spent a lot of time with my Northern grandparents on my mum's side growing up. I have recently discovered that some phrases I use; 'lugs' and 'slops' for example are Northern words, picked up from my mum and my grandma. I previously saw this use of different words and my Northern/Southern combination accent as wrong but I now see it as a part of me. The way I speak and use language is fluid and changes depending on who I am mixing with. In the past I saw this as inauthentic, however I now see that there is nothing wrong with this and a variety of words and accents is something to be thoroughly enjoyed.

Spelling

Again, I don't remember learning to spell, I just remember being able to. I do remember, in Year 3, however, where I must have been 7 years old and already a little arrogant in regards to my spelling. Someone in the class had asked the teacher how to spell "prayer." Miss Patterson wrote the word on the blackboard and I just could not get my head around the y. I walked to the front of the classroom and said, "Miss Patterson, are you sure you spell "prayer" like that?" She said, "yes, Jessica." I haven't spelt the word wrong since.

Jessica-Sky Motion

Experience

The anxiety and the fear
No job for another year
Not good enough
Not wise enough
Not experienced enough.

Ah yes, experience
Well, what can you do when the opportunity is ripped away?
They say 'keep calm and carry on'
But what if I want to save that for another day?

Today I can be angry things didn't go as planned
And today I can be angry that it is out of my hands.
I cannot control time and I cannot control the past
But can they control my future?
Will the effects of those things last?

For now I can be angry and wallow in frustration
But someday I'll have to stand up and take control of the situation.
When that day comes I'll be ready to take reign
But till then I'll keep company with the flurry in my brain.

Jessica Pike

Double Figures

My tenth birthday, double figures
I rise to the occasion in pinstripe trousers.
I haven't eaten him
Although I find myself pulling tufts of the dog's long white hair
Out from between my teeth.
My teeth have fallen from their places
Obliterated, coarsely ground.
My sore and uneven gums, crunch on them,
A prickly hard white paste
Moving, all over my tongue.

Personal Language History.

Concrete nouns in my life

-- *Mummy/mum*

I don't really remember ever calling my mum "mummy" – it seems to evoke a sense of affection and intimacy between us that I also can't really recall. A memory around this word comes to mind, however. I must have been four years old, maybe even younger as I don't remember my brother being around. I was waiting in a fish and chip shop with my dad. I noticed a woman across the main road walking away from me, holding hands with two little girls about my own age. Her back was to me but her red hair was cut the same as my mum's was, she even had a long pale pink wool coat on like my mum's. I really thought this woman was my own mother walking away with two other little girls – obviously outraged I let myself out of the fish and chip shop by the heavy door and screamed, "mummmmmmm!" across the busy road. I did get her attention and the woman turned around. It wasn't my mum.

-- Nouns associated with my mother

Eggs
Bacon

-- Daddy

I know I did call my dad this because I've been told so, but I can't really remember doing so – I can't remember saying it. I do remember how grown up it felt though, to call him "dad."

-- Nouns associated with my father

Soldiers
Paint
Books

-- Granny

My grandma *hated* to be called Granny. I remember my brother and I trying to provoke her when I was around 14 – "shall we go for a walk *Granny?*" She would always stop what she was doing and coldly and firmly insist we call her Grandma. Grandma was quite an old-fashioned and distant woman and her requesting this is a great example of her attitude toward us.

-- Nouns associated with my grandmother

Lego
Stiletto
Rabbit

-- Grandpa

My granddad died before I had turned four but I have quite clear memories of him. At least, I can remember how it felt to be around him. I remember us playing with Lego together and can remember being outside with him. He was from Newcastle and I really believe that I can still remember how soft his voice and accent was, as well as how much kindness he emanated.

-- Nouns associated with my grandfather

Lego
Tricycle

Nicknames:

-- *Fish*

Someone someday found out that a Pike is a fish, and the rest is history... Incredibly, this name stuck for a while around my being 13. Thankfully it never left my immediate friendship group.

-- *Fishica*

A derivative of Fish, I always preferred this one: I secretly thought it was a smarter invention of my friends'. Again thankfully it somehow never left our immediate friendship group.

Verbs and verb phrases:

-- *To play*

My first understanding of this is to "play out" – to play out on the streets with the other children who lived near me.

Accent:

My mum's accent is a strong Leeds accent. I suppose that I subconsciously or at least secretly struggled with this as I was growing up. I went to a school where a strong accent was frowned upon and so without realising I worked to speak less like my mum. Now, however, I love and am grateful for my accent – I feel almost spiritually linked to Yorkshire and so this part of me feels an intrinsic part of my identity. It bothers me now that my best friend who grew up very close to me still works to absolve herself of her Yorkshireisms, pronouncing "cinema" as "cinemarr," for instance. Perhaps it's an effect of the school we went to.

Reading:

I still feel lucky in the fact a gift I've received and kept from my parents is a love for reading; hungrily accepted at a young age. I can't really remember learning to read, I can just remember being able to.

My dad used to make up stories and tell them to me as I was falling asleep as a child: a recurring cast of Postman Pat and Sleeping Beauty, to name but a few. When he wasn't doing this, he'd read *The Connybeans* to me – a story of epic

bean warfare he has written that took him 40 years to finish: David Pike's magnum opus. From here we moved to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – and so I'd experienced the adventures of Middle Earth before I was 8.

I remember having silent reading time in Year 6, I was reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Mrs Janney was walking around the classroom to check everybody was reading. I remember holding out my book to show her and she said, "I know you're reading." This gave me a quiet happiness. Predictably, I did really enjoy reading the *Harry Potter* series as a child – I just loved getting lost in that world, it makes me feel quite safe and warm.

Since I was a teenager, I can recall my dad proudly proclaiming me as well read - this only served to add to my precociousness. Heavily influenced by my dad, I was making my way through the classics and a lot of the Russian greats from about the age of 14. I remember taking *Anna Karenina* out of the school library, it not having been borrowed for years, the librarian in such a state of excitement at my choosing this: "Oh, you're going to LOVE this book!"

I remember being on holiday hearing my dad hysterically laughing at a book he was reading. I had to read it after him. It was *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It's now one of my favourite books. From here I fell in love with Hermann Hesse – he brought me to realise there's an alternate, mystical aspect to life. He also brought me to experiencing just that.

I remember being quietly proud of all the journeys I'd taken through books. I felt all this acquired experience somehow made me older and wiser. The only time I felt estranged from my school friends was in regards to this. Not many of them read, and if they did they weren't interested in much else outside of the chick flick genre. I didn't have anyone other than my dad to speak to about all these new and wonderful ideas I was having on account of my reading such stories.

Early experiences

-- When did I fall in love with poetry?

I struggled with poetry for a long time. My first exposure to it was through my parents – they have different tastes but loved it equally as much. The emotion my dad most freely exhibits is anger, and so he certainly didn't openly or publicly exhibit any emotional response to poetry, always in solitude. My mum on the other hand would respond to poetry with quite a wild emotion – often in floods of tears. This made me uncomfortable and therefore I looked at poetry as something I didn't want to know.

The next real exposure was A-Level Literature. This was when I had first realised independently that poetry could be something of pleasure, but my poetry teacher managed to make it one of the most sleep-inducing things that

I'd ever come into contact with. I had nightmares sound-tracked by a repeated, "rode the six hundred."

It was evident my teacher loved poetry, but we would plough through the syllabus with such tedium, all I remember— apart from that haunting refrain — is feeling as if the class were in a vacuum, devoid of all enjoyment. Similar to how I felt at GCSE, I saw poetry as a trial one must endure in order to pass, rather than something to feel and explore its limitless boundaries.

It was a while before I plucked up the courage to delve into poetry again, and came to love it pretty late. I must have been around 27 when this happened. I realised that poetry can be such a wonderful and beautiful projection of your experience and emotion and whilst, like most true art forms, there's an element of self-indulgence, I found my first attempts at writing poetry quite cathartic.

My dad had always written poetry since he was a teenager, and having read some of his work around the same time, it was quite a beautiful insight into the emotions of such a stoic man and to be able to see the world through the fragile and shimmering colours, which he does. I suppose it was my realising this that led to my re-discovery of the poetry world.

Further to this, a long and painful relationship came to an end. I ventured to the poetic rite of passage in Ted Hughes and his *Birthday Letters*. It was this collection of poetry that truly cemented my love for this form — as one of the most raw reflections of the human soul. I read this collection as one that speaks about the incredible limits to which we can push each other to, but I read it at the right time — one which helped me to stabilise myself at what was the most turbulent time in my life.

Big schools

I had a great time at high school and loved every minute of it. I was very lucky to have a wonderful group of friends: six girls and six boys, and without realising what it was at the time, we had a rare and fantastic support network between us.

Mrs Moores was my English teacher. I remember always being engaged in her lessons and wanting to prove to her my ability. My friend Gemma and I had to leave the classroom once as we had been talking — we were both really sad that we'd let her down.

Handwriting

My handwriting is something now that I am proud of and even often complimented on. However, I remember vividly in Year 4 — so I will have been 8 years old — the transition from pencil to Berol's Handwriting Pen. If you

were deemed to now be writing neatly enough the teacher promoted you to “using pen in class” status. I still feel burned by the fact I was one of the last in the class to be awarded this. I still don’t understand it – I’d always considered my writing to be very neat.

Typing

My dad’s the type of person who only uses his first fingers to type. My mum, when younger, was a typist for a short time and so she can use every finger at lightning speed. I quickly realised out of the two of my parents, it’s my mum who lives closer to reality - and so I quickly equated typing to a necessity.

Spelling

Again, I don’t remember learning to spell, I just remember being able to. I do remember, in Year 3, however, where I must have been 7 years old and already a little arrogant in regards to my spelling. Someone in the class had asked the teacher how to spell “prayer.” Miss Patterson wrote the word on the blackboard and I just could not get my head around the y. I walked to the front of the classroom and said, “Miss Patterson, are you sure you spell “prayer” like that?” She said, “yes, Jessica.” I haven’t spelt the word wrong since.

A memory a little later is of my mum and I watching a spelling programme on TV. Both of my parents are good at spelling, but my mum especially. I remember the word at hand was “prerogative” – we showed each other our spellings and they were different. It turned out that I was right and my mum was wrong, I think she might have said well done, but I remember a stiffness in atmosphere.

Another spelling memory highlight was from Year 5 and so I was 9 years old. It was science lesson and the teacher asked the class whether anyone knew how to spell the word “pneumonia.” A few hands shot up, including my own. My hand had to stay up for what felt like an hour whilst Miss Bacon went round ten other hands. Each started with “N...” I was sweating with frustration at having to withstand all of these wrong attempts. Finally, Miss Bacon came to me. “P...” I felt like I was silently glowing with the pride of being the one to spell it correctly.

The notion of a Personal Language History was new to me at the start of the course. I wondered what writing one might bring to me. I’ve found it personally beneficial to think of early memories in order to process family issues now. Aside from this, I have utilised this exercise in numerous lessons from a standpoint that it is a great tool in order to incite students’ confidence in exploring identity and how this may or may not link to language.

Rebecca Redding

Personal Language History

It didn't take me long as a child to realise that my language was different from that of those around me - although it was not, strictly speaking, my language itself which was different. My *accent* was different from those around me. *Posh*. I heard this word a lot in the playground. *Posh*. It became almost a dirty word to me. I defended myself with a slew of arguments of variable honesty: my parents don't earn that much money; I'm actually really poor; it's because my mum is Canadian.

I latched onto the last one, almost desperately. I called trousers 'pants', even though it caused confusion and sometimes embarrassment when someone thought I was referring to underwear. I ate 'candy' as a treat and walked home on the 'sidewalk'. Even now, my mother's caller ID in my phone is 'Mom'. I've never changed, even though I now pronounce it 'Mum' again.

Once I left my hometown and moved away to university, my accent was again the subject of attention, although in a very different way to before. Suddenly the way I pronounced words like 'bath' and 'grass' was wrong - but not posh this time. *Common. Northern. West Country*. My southern, London, Oxford friends started to make fun of me - although in a gentler, friendlier way this time - because I now sounded the opposite of posh. I reacted, again, but this time I resisted making excuses for myself. I strengthened the short vowels I was being singled out for, increased the 'common' sayings that would garner laughter from my friends. Once, waiting at an airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, a friend and I were arguing about whether bath has a long or a short 'a'. A woman in the queue in front of us turned around and backed me up. "It's *bath*," she said to me, clipping the word to make it clear that the long, southern vowel would not be accepted here, "And don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

I have always thought deeply about language and its consequences and implications. It took me a long time to settle on a name I liked: 'Rebecca' always sounded like I was in trouble; 'Becca' is reserved only for my family and feels almost too intimate if anyone I am only casually acquainted to says it; the cultural phenomenon of 'Becky' with her complaints and insufferability has ruined that for me; 'Bex' always seems too casual. I've come to terms with it now, accepting anything except Becky.

Even my surname has given me plenty of cause for thought. I like Redding; it is easy to pronounce and spell (so long as I remember to mention it is not spelled like the city), the 'ing' gives it a satisfying flourish when written and 'Ms Redding' sounds to me like a young, fun, enthusiastic teacher. Even the misspellings I enjoy, particularly when one student last year wrote 'Mr rennings' on the front of his English book and then, when I asked him to check the spelling, threw his hand to his forehead in frustration at himself and carefully crossed out the 's' at the end.

It is not just me in my family who has an interesting relationship with names. My parents gave me permission to give middle names to my brother (as a respectable two-and-a-half year old I chose Christopher Robin, a fact my brother has still not forgiven me for) and my sister (I wanted to call her Flower but was encouraged to settle on Daisy, perhaps to save her the embarrassment to which I had condemned my brother). My brother was also allowed to give our sister a middle name, although as a two-and-a-half year old himself, he took it rather less seriously than I had. "Nothing," he declared, scrunching his face up and crossing his arms, "Nothing!" My sister was duly given the middle names Daisy Nothing, although my parents declined to put the latter on her birth certificate. Now, though, if you were to ask her what her full name was, she would include the 'Nothing'. It's part of her.

A name that I cannot think of without a whole range of emotions is 'Fwalla'. This was the name I gave to my maternal grandmother when I could first talk, trying to mimic my father calling her 'Thelma'. It stuck, and even when my cousin was born 15 years later, he called her Fwalla. For me, Fwalla is associated with shortbread (freshly made for her on Christmas Day, where she'd open the package in clear delight and eat a piece, only grudgingly offering it around the room), with sour cream and onion pretzels, with handwriting that slanted much it was almost illegible. The word itself is warm and safe - I would go to hers whenever I got into an argument at home, knowing I would be accepted without judgement.

When speaking of my family and of language, it is impossible not to mention books. The first thing anyone notices when they enter our family home is the sheer number of books we own. Entire walls have been turned into floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, crammed with books of all genres, age and provenance: second-hand, fresh from Waterstones, new, ancient, crime, children's literature, non-fiction, action, fantasy, picture books, magazines, comics. I rarely take a book home with me when I go to visit, unless I am reading one I cannot put down, as I know I can peruse the shelves for ten minutes and come up with something I have never seen before. Books were always gifts in my

house, with brand new copies given at Christmas and birthdays and charity shop finds left on my bed when I came home from school.

The first book I can remember being enthralled by was *Harry Potter*. My uncle gave me the box set of the first four books for my ninth birthday and I didn't put them down until I had finished. My mother says I disappeared into the world of Harry Potter from that moment on; when I was reading the books, I would adopt the personas of the characters and speak exclusively about Hogwarts and spells and wizards. I would take the books into school and read them under the table - I remember once getting into trouble for reading *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* when I was supposed to be doing maths. I wished, desperately, to get a letter the summer before my 11th birthday, and it was with a great sadness that I went off to a normal, Muggle secondary school instead of Hogwarts.

One of my favourite photos of myself is when I was about 12. My siblings and I are sitting in the garden, and my brother and sister are playing with a variety of toys. I am there in the middle, acutely focused on the tattered *Harry Potter* book in front of me, holding the drooping cover in place with one hand while keeping my page with the other. A strand of hair has fallen from behind my ear but I clearly haven't noticed. It's such a beautiful day and I can just imagine what my mother had said to me before that photo was taken - "Get out of the dark house and into the garden, you need some sun!". Over the years, I allowed the books to release me, although they have always provided me with a source of comfort. Both my family and I know that if I am reading *Harry Potter*, I am very stressed indeed.

I have loved other books as well. *To Kill a Mockingbird* will always be a favourite of mine, partially because it's my mother's favourite and partially because the character of Scout is so believable and so likeable. Maya Angelou's autobiographical series will always stay with me, as will Tim Lott's *Fearless*. I also enjoy books that are easy to read and provide an escape (books that often would be labelled as 'trashy' or 'easy-reading'). Although they may not offer the literary challenges of the classics (both traditional and modern), I think what they offer is as valuable in many ways. As such, I always buy the new book Lee Child's *Jack Reacher* series and I am fond of both romance and crime as a genre.

When I started teaching last year, my attitude towards certain books changed dramatically. I had never considered myself much of a fan of classic literature and was a little dubious about teaching texts such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Shakespeare's plays. I needn't have worried. I loved them. I discovered all the things which had been missing throughout my own English education (which had, in fact, put me off studying English at A Level or

university). I revelled in the tiny yet fascinating quirks of language which imbue such meaning to a text, the beauty of the written word and the excitement which comes from dissecting and analysing choices of words or phrases. I felt these texts and their worlds come alive for me in a way they never had before; all of a sudden, when I read *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 1940s New Orleans appeared before me, the smell of the 'brown river' floating headily around and the sound of blue piano faintly tinkling in the distance.

I have always been a writer. My laptop is littered with stories I've written over the years; everything from ideas that failed almost before they began, with only a few sentences on the page before my motivation petered out, to a 80,000 word manuscript I wrote in three weeks in the summer of 2018. When writing this, I understood for the first time what the ancient authors mean when they referred to the 'Muse' inhabiting them and inspiring them. I felt this, felt the story bud in my mind and blossom on the page, felt my fingers dancing across the keyboard with little idea of what they were writing. It was almost like reading the story for the first time as it appeared on the screen in front of me. Those three weeks passed in a whirlwind. I barely slept, ate or spoke to anyone else. I felt possessed, but it was glorious. I felt like a *writer*. I've reread and edited and changed the manuscript since, but no one yet has been allowed to read it. One day, perhaps, I will share my writing; maybe I will even accomplish my dream as a child, and get it published. But in a way, it doesn't matter. Whether anyone else ever reads anything I've written, it still makes up a part of my language history. I am a reader, a speaker and a writer.

Alexander Russell

Dreams

Playing hopscotch with my thoughts
The stones in my head

I hear the sound of laughter
As I lie back and jump

By day I stare at my houseplants
At night I forget my name

Nightmares

Strange frequencies resonate
They expand, and grow stronger
In each passing moment

Later on, the vibrations pause
And through chewing teeth
I hear you garble
“What is tar”?

Personal Language History.

I asked my parents what my first words were, but they said that they didn't know. I have two younger brothers and must have developed my language skills from talking and playing with them and my parents. I'm sure that being the eldest child influenced the way I communicated, not having any older siblings felt like a disadvantage in primary school where I was not aware of all the cool things that my schoolmates seemed to know about. I used to be very shy at this age and perhaps my perceived inadequacy was the reason why.

I was able to read quite early on in primary school. My parents made a conscious effort to read me books from a very young age. I had alphabet wallpaper with the names of words going around the room and they used to read me and my brothers picture books when very young. They continued to read with us well into primary school and I have fond memories of my mum falling asleep mid-sentence whilst reading the early Harry Potter books.

I had a computer game which I used to play obsessively that taught me all about spelling and grammar. It was called ‘Lil’ Howie's Funhouse’. I can still remember all the naff songs and sound effects, but I think it was probably incredibly useful in getting me to memorise grammar.

I had a real love of reading at this age, devouring anything I could get my hands on at the library. A strong memory I have from this time is discovering the new Harry Potter book had been released whilst in the shops with my Dad. He bought it for me, and I remember excitedly running back into the house to show my mum who was asleep after working night duty.

My Dad never read books which confused me when I was a child. Reading was something that my Mum and I would bond over, and I could tell that she was proud that I was a good reader.

I used to read anything I could get my hands on. I was the type of child who would rather sit by myself and read than do anything else. When I was in

primary school my favourite books were the Harry Potter books. I was never really into fantasy, but I loved reading something that adults seemed to read as well.

I got given a book whilst I was still in primary school called 'You Wait Till I'm Older Than You!' by Michael Rosen. All I had really read up to this point was novels and I loved this collection of often very silly and funny poems but also with odd poems about Jewish history and daily school life which I found fascinating and confusing at that age. I went and found this book in the Goldsmiths library and was filled with joy upon reading it again

I used to love reading football annuals and magazines: I read these obsessively, I think I enjoyed them particularly because there was an endless supply of them, and I could just read on and on. I still have a real fondness for the way they were written and the sense of humour in these magazines. I can thank them for my encyclopaedic knowledge of useless football statistics.

I mainly liked to read things that I thought were funny, I still do. My favourite series of books was the Roy Apts - 'How to handle' series. They were joke guides to handling relationships with family and friends. They had a very surreal and anarchic sense of humour which I loved. I think they were probably quite helpful for child development in the way they talked about and recognised complicated relationship dynamics, even if it was in a very silly way.

I developed a taste for texts that were surprising or rebellious in some way. I was never a fan of genres which felt derivative or predictable and I remember feeling like I had disappointed my Dad when I hated reading 'The Hobbit'. I have always loved texts that challenge or change the way you think. My favourite feeling when I was younger was the kind of surprise when you read something and think "I didn't know you could do that".

On reflection I now see that I had a fixed mindset to learning, as well as a real anxiety about exams and testing from a young age. I would get very upset and stressed at the idea of not getting 10/10 for fear of disappointing people and would cheat if possible, to ensure that this happened. I remember thinking it was very important that I did well even at that age, and I didn't really have any enjoyment in English beyond my own private reading.

I can't really remember any teacher inspiring me to read throughout the entirety of my school career. But In year 5 I had a teacher who I was very fond of and I enjoyed his lessons immensely. There was a real celebration of English language and my confidence and writing ability improved under him. I remember learning similes and metaphors in the class and us all gathering round to sing songs with him playing the guitar. He used to sing songs about Mexico and American settlers which I would sing around the house to make my family laugh. I heard one of the songs come on the radio recently, I had

forgotten about it and was surprised by how happy and nostalgic it made me feel although my girlfriend told me it was deeply problematic with strong colonial overtones.

Whilst at secondary school I was always in the top set and was a relatively high achiever. However, I felt ignored by teachers and I remember lessons either being agonisingly dull. Studying 'Lord of the flies' was a particularly painful experience which has left me with a lifelong hatred for the book. I'm looking forward to teaching it and reading the book again as an adult, it surely can't be as bad as I remember.

In hindsight I regret not pursuing English at A level but at the time I had no interest in any further study in English. Despite being in the top set I had little confidence in my writing and little enjoyment in the subject.

I didn't really read for pleasure again until university. I went to university in Scotland and whilst there I discovered the writers, Ali Smith and Jackie Kay. It was through reading these two writers in particular that I started to regain a love of reading.

One book I really loved around this time was 'A disaffection' by James Kelman, and it probably remains my favourite book to this day. However, this austere account of the week in the life of a depressed teacher, probably singlehandedly put me off becoming a teacher for years.

The realisation that I wanted to become a teacher came very suddenly to me. A teacher friend was describing his job to me and something just clicked, I knew that I would make a great teacher. I knew that I had the passion to make children love reading in the same way that I did.

I am so glad that I made that decision. So far, I have found teaching tremendously rewarding and I have enjoyed every second in the classroom. Teaching is so much more than I thought it would be and I have loved my experience at Goldsmiths, I feel I have been exposed to a wide and diverse range of ideas and teaching techniques and it has been a privilege going on this teaching journey with my fellow PGCE students. I feel that I have learnt a massive amount from different people within the class and it has been a joy to share this experience with such a passionate and talented group of people.

Matilda Rostant

The Dream Price

‘Welcome to Pay&Dream, the place where we provide dreams tailored just for you.’

I stop at the sound of the automated female voice with one foot still not over the threshold. I adjust my eyes to the light from the bleak LED lights bouncing off the white walls.

‘Can I help you, mate?’ the man behind the counter shouts across the room.

‘I...’ my voice cracks. I clear my throat and try again. ‘I’m here to buy a dream.’

‘Great, you’re in the right place. Don’t make me repeat the welcome message, too bloody long. Just get over here and pick something.’ He waves me over. ‘And close the door,’ he adds, ‘you’re letting in the rain.’

I take another step inside and the door shuts behind me. The shop is different from the one I used to go to in Deptford; it’s empty, without the usual queue spilling out on the street along the market. The silence makes me uncomfortable.

I shouldn’t have come here. While contemplating how to excuse myself and walk out the door, the shopkeeper walks up to me, tablet in hand and a customer service grin on his face. I give him my name and address as he types on the screen.

‘So, what are you looking for?’ he asks. ‘We have a range of standard dreams, or you can tailor it for an extra fee. As you know, the standard duration for retaining the dream is one month, anything beyond that has a fixed cost per month.’ He scrolls down the screen, images of dreams all blurring into one colour. ‘I can see from our database that you haven’t been in a Pay&Dream shop for the past two years, have you been watching the livestreams?’

I shake my head.

‘No? Really? Two years without a dream must be torture.’

Of course being without dreams is torture, I wanted to reply, *but not everyone can afford them.*

Another customer walks in. The shopkeeper shoots him a smile as the automated voice message plays from the speakers.

‘I’ll be with you in a moment, sir,’ he says and turns back to me. ‘If you want me to show you how to connect you to our livestreams, we can log into your account and —’

‘Why would I want somebody else’s dream?’ I cut off.

The shopkeeper flinches at the tone in my voice. ‘Many people do,’ he murmurs and hands me the tablet. ‘Take a look, and I’ll come back to you.’

I take the tablet. It is surprisingly light in my hand and the smooth surface caresses my fingertips. I scroll through the discounted dreams. I want to ask the shopkeeper why these particular dreams are on offer. Is it because they are more attainable? Or is it because they only give you a small sense of comfort, as opposed to euphoria? I look at the icon in the top-right corner. It has my name typed in bold, and a picture of me I didn’t know existed. *Ah... the dreams on offer are dreams I don’t actually want. And, I conclude, the dreams I want the most will always be out of my price range.* The realisation leaves me numb.

The shopkeeper returns. ‘So, what will it be?’ he asks politely, but with a hint of urgency as more customers enter the shop.

I hand back the tablet. ‘I don’t think I’ll get any dreams today.’

Sasha-Marie Simpson

Dreams: Grandad

By Sasha Simpson

Peace Be With You was Your ‘ora’,
Safe, Secure, Surrounding was Your Love,
Full Face, Infectious Smile, Clean Shaven,
was Your Style...

Red Car to go school, always early,
Two hands on the steering wheel – shaky control.
Bag of snacks, collection time, couldn’t wait to greet You at 3pm.

As Time went On, We Both Grew Older,
One thing NEVER Faded – LOVE.
Now You’re Gone, I’m left here...

All I Feel is Peace Be With You.

Personal Language History

1. 'Motherland'... Welcome to Jamrock!

Let me begin by stating I was not born in Jamaica (JA), neither were my parents. It is my Grandparents who have the direct connection with this beautiful land, however, two generations later I still feel like the land is home. In my lifetime, I have gone 'back home' six times and every time it gives me the same feeling of warmth, pride, safety, acceptance and HOME.

Patois is the 'language' that is spoken in JA. Jamaican Patois, known locally as Patois (Patwa or Patwah) and called Jamaican Creole by linguists, is an English-based creole language with West African influences (a majority of loan words of Akan origin) spoken primarily in Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora.

FUSION (JA & UK)

As I stated prior, I wasn't born or did not grow up in JA. English was and is my first language (even though I would argue that I don't speak 'proper English'). Needless to say, I had to learn quickly how to understand patois as my Grandparents and older family members would and will speak in their native tongue. I remember I used to detest the tongue as I couldn't understand and would feel excluded from the family unit, however, as I grew older and became accustomed to the dialogue, it embodied everything family means – to be with people, who understand and accept you without condition. It gives me a sense of pride and heritage...

2. United Kingdom – England

To be honest, I don't have much to say about the UK. Yes, it is home. Yes, I was born here - Greenwich, London. Yes, English is my first language...

I am the second generation of my ancestors that were born in this country, and with all this being said, I find it difficult to create a strong bond with 'my country'. What I can say is, I'm proud (which is an understatement) of the struggles that my grandparents and parents faced to make a life in the UK. They were faced with great adversity but still strived through to create this blessing of a life for me and my family. So, coming back to the UK and I – I will do my best to keep paving the way for my family and proving that what they went through was not in vain. When life gives you lemons... you make lemonade and I will be making gallons to ensure I continue to pave the way for the future generations.

3. Family

Mother, Father, 3 Brothers, 1 Sister, 3 Nephews, 1 Niece and MY Precious Daughter.

This is what makes up my immediate family, this is unconditional LOVE; they are ME and I am THEM. If you allow me to breakdown some of these **components...**

Mother: Mummy, Mum, Mama! Notice that she comes first. Stereotypically, father is the head of the household and the first to be mentioned and yes, my father is the head of the household, BUT (and it's a big but) my mother is the one that holds down the coop. She is the backbone, the silent enforcer, the loving caregiver, the reasoner, when she speaks everything makes sense – nothing in the world matters when Mummy says it's all OK.

Father: I call him 'Daddy'. This word transcends above the highest point on this earth. It means a safe haven, my bodyguard, a warm shelter to seek refuge when the storms try to carry me away, the 'money' man. You could say that I'm a Daddy's girl (some family members would say I'm being modest and really the word is spoilt brat) and I won't be offended. I know he would move heaven and earth for me if he could and he makes this crystal clear by his actions. He is a silent 'congratulator', I can see in his eyes when he is proud without him having to say a word. This for me is all that needs to be communicated.

However, with all this being felt, there is also a sense of perfection when I think of him. Because he has been to 'the moon & back for me' I feel I need to be his 'perfect little girl' and in reality, perfection cannot be met. This leads to me chasing something that cannot be caught – bringing notions of disappointment, not being 'good enough' & regret. But it's not Daddy's fault – is it?!

Sister: My only Sister. My younger twin. I remember the day she was born: my Daddy came to collect me from school, and we headed straight to the hospital. When I saw her, I remember saying 'she is my baby' and from this day I subconsciously became her protector. I didn't have to play with fake dollies any longer, I had the real deal. As time went on and we grew together, she became my 'handbag' (*thanks to my mum which at times I hated as she would 'cramp my style'*) but looking back at this, it enabled us to have an unbreakable bond that surpasses any adult relationship I make in this life. I know she will be with me through the toughest of times and in some way the tables have turned and she is now my protector.

MY Precious Daughter: Well, well, well... Where to start? This name Daughter connotes so many words, feelings and awakens ALL of my senses. The best way to describe how I feel is in this poem written by Selena Odom (2018):

See What I See

If you could see what I see when I look at you,
You'd definitely love you, too.
You would hold your head up high,
For you possess beauty that no one can deny.

If you could see what I see when I look at you,
There's no way you'd be so down and blue.
You wouldn't be able to contain your smiles,
For your charm goes on for miles and miles.

If you could see what I see when I look at you,
You'd know there's nothing you can't do.
You'd do things without fear you'll fail,
For you've got many talents yet to unveil.

Please try to see what I see when I look at you.
You will feel refreshed and new.
All the anger, shame, and insecurities will just go.
I promise BABY GIRL, you are too good to ever hang your head low.

4. Friends

Friends to me means the family that I have chosen. My Bredrin, My G, My Homie, My Confidant, My 'Guy', My Babes – these are just some of the expressions used to portray my love for this group of people... This is an important noun, as going through life we meet many people, cross many paths and engage with a variety of people daily. But when I call you my friend, when you're in my circle of love, it means our Souls are aligned, I've seen and felt something in your being that matches mine and came to a mindful decision that we can grow and walk together in this journey called life.

5. South East London – Lewisham Borough

P.O.M.E – Product Of My Environment.

Honoured is what comes to mind when I think of my 'endz'. An overwhelming feeling encompasses my body and I get butterflies in my stomach when I think of London and the town where I grew up. Childhood memories flash up in my mind to where I first learned to ride a bike, to my first

friendships formed, to my first crush but as we all know too well, life can be hard and my area is where I went from being an angelic child to a young adult very quickly. I experienced discrimination & abuse for being Black, I experienced my friend being killed when he was 16 to knife crime, riots and rallies of the unjust system, the National Front intimidating you because it's 'their country and we should go back home', the list is endless... but as much as this can deter you from loving the town you're from, there is always hope and light to be found and this is where community kicks in. Community is a word for me that no one can break, it has a magical significance for me. It is built up of many different people, different shades, different ages, different walks of life but who all have the same goal: Love of People, Love of the Environment and activists for Change. So yeah, I really do love where I'm from and will always 'rep' my town!

6. London Corporate World

This is where I used 'proper English' if that's what we can call it or tried too. The dialect my ancestors never quite mastered, the dialect my schoolteachers 'trained' me to speak, the dialect that connotes you're 'someone of importance' in this world (Bullshit!). It never really fit with me, but some say practise makes perfect and now having had spent 8 years working in this 'world', I am able to disguise my voice to where my friends say I sound like a Caucasian woman on the phone – not sure whether to take this as a negative or positive... Corporate brings a sense of fear and judgement mainly because I fought hard to get through the doors as I wasn't the conventional female some establishments were looking for. I was and still am a Confident Black Woman that speaks my mind with no filter. If I was still in my early 20's I would say that this isn't a problem, but as I've matured a saying comes to mind 'Never argue with a fool, onlookers may not be able to tell the difference'. I learned to fight battles carefully and shake off negative energy from insecure individuals who judge you from the start. I can agree that there needs to be set standards when you are in certain professions, but the question that arises is 'Who are the *people* that are setting these standards?'

Sasha's concept map of her PHL and translation chart

SASHA'S PERSONAL LANGUAGE HISTORY...

1. FAMILY

BOB MURPHY → MARCUS ONEVEY → POETIA SIMPSON MILLER → SUSAN BOLT → NAOMI CAMPBELL → MARY SENECA

2. CULTURE

SAGE → MAN HEIGHT → SIR TREVOR MCDONALD → STORMZY → ARIALA → MALOGIE BLACKMAN → LEWY HENLEY → DAVID LANNY → ASHLEY WATKES

3. FAMILY WORDS

DOORAH! (STEREOTYPE: I was 15, so old. Playing with my friends in Gibraltar. My father has often hit me, causing down the slide. Black children!! He was saying he got in trouble, he is sleep from being crying, one of my siblings said) DOORAH! and laughter (English and European things out of the mouth) the word DOORAH is used!

CHILDHOOD FIRST WORDS: Penicea, DOOGA, WOOR WOOR, DADA, MAMA, HAY?

4. F.R.I.E.N.D.S.

Product of my environment: LEWISHAM HIGH ST SE13

6. DIVERSITY HERE

SALES MANAGER → CUSTOMER SERVICE SUPERVISOR → ADMIN

ENGLISH PHRASES	JAMERICAN DIALECT PHRASES
I will Be Right Back	Be Soon Gone
To Eat	Nibble
Jamaican	Jamrock, Jamtown, Yard
Jamaican	Yardie, Yard man
Friend	Brethren (male), Sistren (female)
Went Down	Big up, Respect
Excellent	Soz all, Top up, Wackout
What's up?	Wah gwaan, Whappers, Who ya a sah?
Something is good	Be doh yah, Everything nice
See you later	I like music, Wack good
I understand	Zeen
One more	One more
What Are You Up To	Who Ya Doh Poo
I Don't Care	Me Back Brest
Badass	Badman
Stop up your drink	Top Up on Ting
The party was good!	The Party Got Up!
Don't mess with me	Nah tring wad me
Agreement/like it	Pass Pass

Translation Chart: Below are words/phrases that I may use in everyday life but will often say them in my native tongue...

ENGLISH PHRASES	JAMAICAN PATOIS PHASES
I Will Be Right Back	Mi Soon Come
To Eat	Nyam
Jamaica	Jamrock, Jamdown, Yard
Jamaican	Yardie, Yard man
Friend	Bredren (male), Sistren (female)
Well Done	Big up, Respect
Excellent	Sell off, Tun up, Wicked
What's up?	Wah gwaan, Whappen, Whe yu a seh?
Everything is good	Mi deh yah, Everyting criss
See you later	Likkle more, Walk good
I understand	Zeen
Over there	Ova deh
What Are You Up To	Wha Yuh Deh Pon
I Don't Care	Mi Nuh Biznizz
Jealous	Badmind
Step up your game	Tun Up De Ting
The party was good!	De Party Tun Up!!
Don't mess with me	Nuh romp wid mi
Argument/Mix Up	Pasa Pasa

Thomas Sissons

ASCENSION

cabby sleeping against his wheel,
resting his head on the moon
light. the stragglers returned to cloistered safety.
no one to sing
in his ear.

policeman slumped over
a detainee. on the cruiser bonnet, each
whisper little murmurs to lunar oblivion,
with none to be taken
as evidence.

wedding planner, head back over her chair,
two devoted plates laid out. months old.
the candle flickers to ink, flickers to
the husband
never returned.

banker dreaming in the great vaults,
orange-purple shapes brushing on his
eyelids. little hands, no doubt,
wanting pocket money. he rolls over and
plays dead.

hermit drowsing in his office cubicle.
does not know his neighbours, they do not know him,
they do not know each other. all think they are
alone. sleeping together
metres apart.

clubbers piled against one another,
photos never taken in hands.
rum-soiled shirts. the judge has left

the cloakroom. confetti a mime
of celebration.

squatters on the roof of the oligarch's mansion,

rough sleepers inside kiss blankets like
hometowns, with no chance of attack
until morning.

RITE OF PASSAGE

The boy points a stick at my head
like a gun. He has seen
the soldiers in Helmand Province and Knightsbridge.
Televised legends. Pre-homeless
glimmer of perfect teeth. Advert fresh.
Glamour-blood. We are outside
the betting shop, in the real world
where the murdered aren't enemies of the state -
just those who are despised by it.

The boy escapes his mother,
flicks his tongue in bullet-rhythm. I am one toll
of his doldrums of duty. I know
he hears the boots
at his door. The shells of bodies
whittling themselves into the barbed wire
of houses. Pregnant with fear. The explosions
of shops. Receipts running
like his fellow troops to the clouds.
Never was war and home
so close. No one can tell
the boy he is a child. The shadow behind him
is six feet tall. And a man
on the edge of death is a militant
boy after all.

I keep a two body distance from his growing
bones. His teeth
fall and reform like nations.

His idols drop about him
like summer rain. Full cinematic colour,
real to the touch, as tangible as uniforms hung
from washing lines, waiting for their buried owners -
some who never die, some who were never born.

When the helmets rotate like pinwheels
on quiet British streets, young hands
grasp for them from behind barricades
of glass. The rush of camouflage
turns armies into streets. Boy,
there is something in your face. I think
it is terror.

Personal Language History.

OUT WITH OWT: A MONGREL'S MEDITATIONS ON THE NORTH, SOUTH AND MIDLANDS

Tommy Sissons

I consider myself to be a mongrel. As regards my personal use of language, my dialect has been shaped throughout my life by an array of communities in the south, north and the midlands. My surname itself, 'Sissons', derives from the martyr St. Cecilia (or 'Ciss'), the patron Saint of musicians, who was introduced to England by the Normans following 1066. All early recordings of my surname originate from Yorkshire, where it remains most popular.

My first word was 'bird', pronounced, for an unknown reason, with a Scottish rolling 'r'. The word has come to be significant to me for several reasons. Most importantly, it is due to my grandad's frequent use of the idea of 'Roots and wings', derived from the American journalist Hodding Carter's quote: "There are only two lasting bequests that we can hope to give our children – roots and wings". In 2000, my grandad wrote a book entitled *Roots and Wings*, documenting the history of the Hunslet Boys Club in Leeds, a youth centre he had frequented as a teenager and subsequently worked for. The value of humble beginnings and ascendance through hard work is held dear throughout my family.

The side of my family I have most contact with (my mother's side) are largely from the ex-industrial powerhouse of south Leeds. Their use of colloquialisms and dialect have become embedded in my language. Phrases and words such as "Oh aye" (Oh really), "butty" (sandwich), "eeh by gum" (oh

my God), “ey up” (hello), “nowt” (nothing) and “owt” (anything) are part of my lexicon and are important to me as signposts of my geographical roots. Many of these words are of old Norse origin, “nowt” and “owt” being particularly represented in the ‘Yorkshireman’s Motto’. This reads:

’Ear all, see all, say nowt;
Eyt all, sup all, pay nowt;
And if ivver tha does owt fer nowt –
Allus do it fer thissen.

This translates into standard English as “Hear all, see all, say nothing; Eat all, drink all, pay nothing; And if ever you do anything for nothing – always do it for yourself”. Whilst not evoking the common northern spirit of generosity, I learnt the code off by heart from a poster at my grandad’s house and it remained a running joke between us during my childhood.

My mother and I also use the phrase “up the dancers” to refer to going upstairs, which, interestingly, originates from Tyne and Wear. My mother’s usage of the saying is, perhaps, due to her spending the very early years of her life in Whitley Bay and the relatively nearby Stockton-on-Tees, although I suspect the phrase has also seeped into Yorkshire.

I am, for personal reasons, distant from my father’s southern side of the family, however, their cockneyisms also filter into my dialect at times. Whilst living in Brighton, most of my friends had cockney parents and the sociolect of east and south London were commonplace in school. The influence of cockney rhyming slang has, at times, an impact on my vernacular. For instance, I use phrases such as “cream crackered” to mean ‘knackered’ or “china plate” to mean ‘mate’. I also use the term ‘geezer’ in reference to men, a south-eastern variant of the obsolete ‘guiser’ of the late fifteenth-century (meaning, a man in disguise). I consider Brighton to be close enough to London to absorb its slang (and certainly its youth slang, which was prevalent during my adolescence) but far enough away for the young to want to migrate to the capital if the opportunity arises. The youth in London, Sussex, Essex and Kent, in my experience, tend to adopt similar dialect due to Londoners’ common occupation of the home counties.

Growing up, I also spent a lot of time at my grandma’s house in Leicester and my aunt’s flat in Worksop (Bassetlaw), my grandad having also moved to Worksop to retire. Thus, the dialect of the east midlands, to an extent, has also found a place in my lexicon, most notably, “Ger’routuv it” (meaning ‘I don’t believe you’) and the form of address, “duck”, derived from the Anglo-Saxon “duka”, meaning ‘duke’. However, similarly to Yorkshire, the east midlands

makes use of phrases such as “ey up” and words such as “owt” and “nowt”, particularly Worksop where the two accents are more interconnected and harder to distinguish. Thus, the influence of the midlands was, to me, a softer version of the influence of Yorkshire.

My earliest memory of the north/south divide stems from when I was, perhaps, four years old, when my father, a southerner, tried to give me a bath, and became irate that I pronounced bath with a short /æ/ like my mother instead of a long /ɑ:/ like himself. Upon realising that my pronunciation irritated him, I began to use it frequently and deliberately, in rejection of what I at the time perceived as his harsher, more aggressive accent and in celebration of the warmer, more familial accents of my northern family. As I grew up, the north/south divide became more obvious. I learnt that my mother had taken elocution lessons when she moved to London in the 1980’s as she could not get a job with a northern accent. She uses a form of standard English when in her work environment or on the phone to someone outside of our family or her friendship circle – her ‘telephone voice’, as she calls it. She began teaching me this when I was a teenager, in order to help me sound more ‘professional’ when going for a job interview. I still make use of it in professional environments, but do not enjoy doing so. I have increasingly found myself more at home in the north and east midlands, whilst still not completely, due to my mongrel accent. As I state in my poem, ‘Motherlands’, I speak with “the measure of the mongrel / standing in all counties, sitting in none”. Thus, wherever I happen to be, I am always quizzed on my voice by locals who can never determine its origins but recognise it as somewhat alien (usually in a positive way, I hasten to add). Whilst my accent broadens and softens depending on who I am speaking to and which city I am in, I am proud of my hybrid voice and have never felt embarrassed of its peculiarity. Instead, I celebrate it as integral to my identity.

Alastair Warner

The Dream of the Lockdown Teacher

The teacher walked across the concourse towards the school. No, I did, it was me, walking across the concourse in searing bright sunshine, squinting my eyes and listening to the calm rush of the breeze and the slumberous birdsong. It’s funny how dreams glide like that, first person to third person; you are living it, then you are watching it, one moment feeling your own feet tapping on the soft tarmac, the next hearing his, this strange man, the teacher returned from

lockdown with short, tufty hair and sticky out ears, *my ears*, approaching the front of the school. An open door and we went inside. People were there, adults of course, milling around the lobby, doing empty tasks. It is never the right people, in dreams. Here, we find my own headteacher from primary school, a fearsome man called Mr. Pond, looming tall, with red cheeks and angry ginger hair, always square shouldered in a leather sports jacket, his hard, angry voice so painful, when I hadn't got 10 in my times table test, or had broken the line to pick up a soft feather from the bushes. It didn't feel strange that Mr. Pond, long dead, was sitting at the front desk of my school, stretched back in an office chair, 35 years after I had left him behind. But the fear wasn't gone, so the man with the sticky out ears dropped his eyes and we carried on.

The silence slapped me. There was none of the ruckus of school. No one was shouting, no child, angry, happy, excited or sad. No bellowing, giggling, slamming of doors or rattling of toys. I couldn't hear the wind any more either. The silence left behind, in its place, was the loudest thing I had ever heard. It strained against my ears. It made me uneasy. Every hair down my arm stood on end, goose pimples in the summer heat. The stillness was everywhere, as if I could feel my fingernails growing, as I pushed through glass doors, hot to the touch under beating summer sun, and surveyed the playground.

There were no children there. In their absence, the space was alien. A wooden play ship floated, unmanned, across the concrete. A curved stage, made of stripped upright logs, lay abandoned: no actors marching its boards. I stood there, dazzled by the sun, and I was disorientated by the silence, so I walked out, into the eerily bright and silent playground, and it was then that I saw them. It wasn't just children, it was my children, my class, all 25 of them, on the football pitch, running, leaping, whooping, yes, really whooping, for as soon as they were there, the sound was back and I could hear their glee and their energy, and the sun had lost its blinding intensity, so I could see, really see, their red jumpers and their white teeth inside gleaming smiles. I ran too, across the playground, not sure if I was the teacher or the little boy, back there in the countryside in the 1980s with Mr. Pond behind me, but I ran, and I whooped and shouted too, but dreams are still dreams, and so of course the gates to the football pitch were firmly, rustily locked, with those amazing eager faces on one side, and my own wild, hopeless smiles on the other. And so I stopped, and I stood there, with my untidy home cut hair bristling in the wind and my sticky out ears quietly singeing in the sun. It felt unkind to see each other, if I couldn't open the gate and bring them out into the playground, if I couldn't tousle their hair and listen to their stories and put plasters on their grazes and solve their disputes and hold their hands as they skipped and

galloped through the world. But they had seen me, and they ran to the gate on one side, and I walked, awkwardly, towards the gate too, on the other.

Teaching is hard. If Mary has 50p when she leaves school, and Khalid gives her 30p, but she spends a 5p, a 2p and a 1p on the way, how much money will she have when she gets home? I was back in the classroom, standing in front of these same children, a little less enthusiastic now, looking longingly out into the playground that we had been standing in, dragging their reluctant minds to the problem at hand. I hopelessly held up a plastic 2p, inexplicably huge, and yet smaller in value than the tiny 5p, obscured by my large, clumsy hands. How much money now? I rummaged in the box. I didn't have a plastic 1p. A fly progressed loudly across the room. I knew the answer, but I couldn't explain quite how.

Back in the playground, I wistfully pulled at the stubborn lock. It was rusted closed: no key would work. My mind drifted further. Sentences. Sentences are just there. Teaching sentences is like teaching rhythm, like trying to find the beat of your soul. A cold day in the classroom now, with rain drumming on the windows and a wild wind blustering, whipping trees and frustrating our concentration. Subject, verb; subject, verb, object; subject, verb, direct object, indirect object. Full stop. Full stop. Exclamation mark. Be boom, be boom, be boom, be boom, be boom. Full stop, new sentence. If you get to the end of your page and you haven't used a full stop, do you think your sentence might be too long? The rain dried away in the sunshine. Back in the playground. The lock couldn't be opened. I looked up at the lofty fence. I am tall. Could I climb? I'm not sporty. I'm certainly not nimble.

Teaching PE is hard. How to do a forward somersault, when you are six foot and bony, with a jagged clump of keys in one pocket and a vast iPhone in the other? In the hall, and small children watched, restlessly, in little shorts and white t shirts. They wanted to run around the cavernous room, full of noise and echo and space, with late winter orange flooding in from skylights. They didn't want to watch a middle-aged man crumple on a thin blue mat, or to hear his knees crick or see him rub his neck. You mustn't land on your neck like that. Try to do it like in this picture. Back to the playground, and the summer sun. I'm giving up. The lock won't move and the fence is too high and I am too old and too achy to climb.

That was when I realised that they were gone. The football pitch was empty now. The children nowhere to be seen. I crumpled again. Dreams always start well. They turn into nightmares later on. I was too late. I hadn't been able to reach them in time. I didn't know the answers and now, the children had gone. I sat down, slowly, sadly, on the tarmac. The sun beat a little lower, through the trees by the pond, and the warmth of the ground was

comforting. I pushed my head back against the metal mesh fence. It was quiet again. Absolutely still. I closed my eyes.

Voices. Small voices. Whooping voices. Whooping and shouting, far away but growing nearer, running, the slamming of small feet on tarmac. I looked up and there they were, all 25 of them, leaping and twisting and somersaulting towards me, on my side of the fence. They all told me at once. They had remembered the gate, no, the other gate, on the other side. It had been locked too, but it was much closer to the school. They had just yelled and someone had heard and arrived with a key and here they were. They beamed. And I remembered then that we never got to 72p for Mary, with her 50p and her 30p, less the 5p and 2p and 1p, because a mischievous and far cleverer hand had shot into the air. How much money did she have when she got home?

“Not enough to buy me a PlayStation.”

Biographies

Adam Croxford

Point: Adam is a teacher, Evidence: he teaches in South London, Analysis: he is aware of the social, psychological and pedagogical issues connected with PEE paragraphs.

Hannah Cotter

Hannah is a creative teacher who perceives the affordances of meditation and nurturing staff and student wellbeing.

Jessica Diamond

Jessica Diamond is an English teacher and bookworm from North London. When she isn't procrastinating, she writes poetry and short stories. She plans to become more dedicated to her writing and may even delve into the realms of non-fiction.

Michael Dench

Michael is a poet and teacher. He uses poetry as a form of reflective practice.

Muna Elmi

Muna is a committed and passionate teacher who always takes very detailed notes.

Anwen Gardner

Anwen can pronounce the longest word in the Welsh language.

Lacey Gregory

Lacey Gregory was born and raised in Southampton, England and moved to London to study American Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London. She graduated in 2019 with First Class Honours and has since pursued a profession in education with the desire to liberate and celebrate the youth of today.

Sumaya Hassan-Adde

Sumaya is committed to finding ways of teaching students with special educational needs and disabilities in a mindful, creative fashion.

Mahasen Jannah

Mahasen prides herself on her organisation and creativity; she is a committed artist and imaginative thinker.

Esther Jones

Esther is well-read in many areas, including the vitally important topics of Black Lives Matter and decolonising the curriculum.

Josh Johnson

Josh Johnson is a Secondary English teacher and creative writer for children and young adults. He has published three titles so far: 'Becoming You & I', 'The Elf Who Forgot About Christmas', and 'A Very Blue Thing'. He is currently working on his fourth book and planning for his first NQT post.

Kayla MacQuarrie

Kayla MacQuarrie is a 20-something teacher who moonlights as a stand up comedian and professional wrestler. She was raised in Essex and now lives in London, her life has been shaped by being autistic and trans.

Katrina Maxted

Katrina is a teacher who values diversity and treasures her pupils' individuality.

Jubel Miah

Jubel has found mindfulness helpful in maintaining a sense of balance during the lockdown period.

Kate Michaelis

Kate believes in being firm but friendly with her pupils, and enjoys coming up with creative lesson ideas.

Jessica-Sky Motion

Jessica-sky knows a great deal about the teaching of creative writing.

Jessica Pike

A 30 year old Leodensian Londoner. Writing when not reading (or teaching).

Rebecca Redding

Rebecca is passionate about making sure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve highly.

Alexander Russell

Alex cogitates regularly upon the affordances of teaching Shakespeare.

Matilda Rostant

Born in Sweden, Matilda Rostant is a fantasy writer now living in London. She has just finished her MA in Creative Writing and Education at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Sasha-Marie Simpson

Sasha is a passionate advocate equality for all. She regularly asks her students to have a 'little shake' in their lessons to help relax them.

Alastair Warner

Alastair Warner grew up in Sussex. Having pursued a career in international relations across several organisations, in his mid-thirties he took the Teach First route into teaching and is now a primary school teacher in southeast London. Alastair has written as a hobby since he was a small child, mostly short stories.