

ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW POET LAUREATE: EDWIN ROBERTS

And to our RUNNERS UP: Ben Davies and Jamie Perry

We were delighted by the response to our Poet Laureate competition and so excited to read all the incredible entries. We hope you enjoy reading the shortlisted poems printed below. We would have been delighted to have any of those shortlisted below in the role and hope they will keep writing. Our winner Edwin will be our Poet Laureate for 2018, and we can't wait to see what he does in this role.

This year the English and Drama faculty want to focus on introducing our students to a diverse range of writers and cultures. We have introduced a range of BAME writers to our KS3 courses, with opportunities for students to research areas of personal interest. The Black History Month Show back in October was a wonderful celebration of the contribution of black artists to British culture and allowed us to celebrate poetry, fiction, plays and lyrics. Particular congratulations to Ebum Adepaju in Year 13, Daniel Shergold in Year 11 for their winning entries in the Black History Month writing competitions. We also had some wonderful poetry written for the Palestine – Israel poetry competition which can all be found on the school website. Congratulations to Sam Gee for winning first place and Joshua Selfridge for winning joint second place. Year 11 enjoyed a fabulous Japanese production of 'Macbeth' at The Barbican. The Sixth Form have enjoyed two theatre trips with Theatre Society to see 'Young Marx' and 'Oslo', and have also been to the Royal Opera House to see two short operas. Enrichment continued with a lecture on The Gothic, followed by one on Gender and Identity with more to follow next year. We have also been focussing on developing public speaking skills. Year 9 and 10 took part in 'Speak Out' workshops, impressing our external providers with their imaginative ideas and presentational skills. Students from all years have been involved in elocution club, performing in entertaining shows and taking their LAMDA exams. We finished the year with our first Literary Lounge in which the shortlisted Poet Laureates delivered their poems impressing the audience with their use of language and confident delivery.

Good luck to all our students taking exams in January!

Recommended books:

- 'We British, the poetry of a people' by Andrew Marr (ages 15+)
- 'Roots' by Alex Haley (ages 14+)
- 'Outliers' by Malcolm Gladwell
- YA fiction: 'Orangeboy' by Patrice Lawrence

Recommended Performances:

- T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry shortlist at the Southbank Centre 14th January
- 'Macbeth' – National Theatre and RSC in cinemas
- 'Pinocchio' – National Theatre
- 'Everybody's Talking About Jamie' (Theatre Soc will be seeing this 17th April)
- 'The Ferryman'

Recommended films/tv

- Alias Grace
- The Handmaid's Tale
- Lady Macbeth
- The Miniaturist

Looking ahead:

8th February at 7pm: 'Showstoppers!' – a night of extracts from West End musicals

9th February at 1pm: Literary Lounge - An opportunity for students to present their own writing

Further ahead:

21st February at 6pm: LAMDA performances by Year 7 students

1st March: World Book Day

12th and 13th March: Matinee at The Globe for Year 7 students

Christopher Tower Poetry Competition deadline February

Theme: SECRETS

Open to students aged 16-18

Brexit. The divorce

Forty-four years of love and affection,
To sever the ties and break our connection.
The children begged that we should not split,
But the adult majority just couldn't commit:
They thought they knew best with regards to the nations,
Experts of course in foreign relations.
Expelling visitors from both our domains,
Now the ghost of our love is all that remains.
You complained when the neighbours came round to say 'Hi',
Said they're stealing your jobs, well that was a lie!
But now you'll be isolated; all by yourself,
When you've exiled the doctors improving your health.
You did not realise the price you would pay,
The money you'd lost after only a day.
Refusing to trade and share your resources,
With tariffs imposed and built up armed forces.
Demanding custody, now is that fair?
You wanted to leave; you set your own snare!

The divorce is official March 2019,
Till death do us part now that's just obscene.
By Sarah Stephen 12P

Royal Wedding

There's nothing like a royal wedding
To royally do one's addled head in
With all the talk and lack of action
I think we're owed a sweet distraction
From matters from foreign far off lands
Where presidents, who don't understand
Make choices most inflammatory
Decisions made by those who cannot see
The repercussions down the line
Harare coup, forced to resign
Or Escape to no such fate
A man who sits and defecates
On politics and common sense
Standing for ignorance under the pretence
of 'violence on both sides was shown'
This from a man who has been known
To sexually harass so many women
His own senators asking 'how is he still in
charge of such a powerful nation?'
A country that's suffered lacerations
Through the fire, flood, and fierce wind
Obamacare he will rescind
Providing fear with such a feast
By declaring capitals in the Middle East
And In all of this, if he does fall
He'll hide behind his fabled wall
But close to home, there is still doubt
As regards the kind of 'out'
This country needs to 'forge ahead'
On a glorious path? Or one to dread
but in the streets the cry rings clear
'I'm a 'brexiteer' get me out of here!'
Gloom, doom and putrefaction
So yes, indeed, a 'sweet' distraction
Don't let these matters get you down
Avert your eyes, and cheer the crown
And Revel in their regal sparkle
And cry: 'God for Harry (and sweet Miss Markle)'

By Ben Davies

Home:

To write a poem about the state of Earth.
So much to say about so much that's sad,
But I must keep my composure, not cry nor curse,
Despite news littered with the immoral and the bad.

Well, who do I choose?
Should I write about Isis and their gruesome crimes,
Or should I write this on the bigots that control our times?
Should I be original or go cliché,
The loony in the White house or Prime Minister May?

A crumbling NHS,
Or a European mess?
Don't forget the hectic of Brexit,
Or a wave of right wing nationalism
And the safe spaces of liberalism
Mixed together amongst fears of terrorism!

It's no secret that the world isn't pretty,
Suffering exists within every city.

So we must delve deeper,
Scandals in Hollywood,
Or the ones next door in our parliamentary neighbourhood,
The Paradise papers, or was it Panama?
It's all the same really,
Rich people getting richer,
making poor people poorer,
But we act so shocked at almost weekly revelations,
Maybe we'll go out in a few demonstrations,
But we'll settle for little or no alteration,
In the face of every enticing invitation.

Look back at Grenfell, the avoidable fire,
Or look forth into a nuclear future that seems quite dire.
The closer we read the more the stakes seem higher,
Yet we believe and perpetuate every television liar.

But, this is not the full story.
These are the images we see on our screens,
These are the headlines, the news rounds, the profit streams.
They're what make you watch, listen, click and read.
But this is no bad place,
We are not a failed race,
So we must delve further and up the pace.

The more we analyse,
The clearer we realise,
That this is not our demise! By Amro Fadel

the arrogant sighs of
important men
ring throughout the station
it's 9am

"Closed due to snow"
the speaker declares
and the tutting grows louder
a sonorous affair

Southeastern always late
an organisation I really hate

Maggie Lan

Wheels on rails
Steam all through the air,
Bolts and nails
The sound of steam heard everywhere,
Wheels on rails
The love of every kid,
This system never fails
And then it did.

No more trains
Dr Beeching shut the lines,
“No more pains
No more cries and no more whines”
No more trains
They shall run here no more,
Never again,
Never more.

So, tear up the sleepers, tear up the tracks!
Tear up the post for the rail mail sacks!
Lock up the box, throw away the brass key
Ensure nothing survives this sweet tyranny!
Knock down the buildings, knock down the bridge,
Fill in the tunnels, fence off the ridge,
This lamp post, those signals, that ballast, this wall -
Destroy it, remove it, demolish it all!

Now a nature reserve, few clues remain
That indicate here a branch line lays slain
A small bit of concrete by an old paving stone
The base of a bridge, a wooden sleeper - alone
Very nice, it may be, for a walk in the woods,
That cover the land where the station once stood
The people of the village now long for the track
At the new minister’s office, they cry “Bring it back!”

The line of South Staffordshire will soon return
And may the transport department finally learn
The cost of rebuilding and clearing the trees,
Pouring the ballast, removing the weeds
Outweighs the costs of it being open,
Yet the time has come - and now they’re awoken
Wheels on rails will return, again
Between Burton-on-Trent and old Brettell Lane.

By Jamie Perry

Faulty Tower

What damage can a faulty fridge do?
What will the reparations cost?
A mere fridge could cause a raging fire too,
For the heavy price of seventy-one lives, now lost.

A small flame was born, nothing less, nothing more,
Who could imagine it’s mother was a loose spark,
All the smoke, all the fear spread from floor to floor,
Then the brightness engulfed, but the trail left was dark.

In the trauma of battle, firemen heard their last legacies,
The everlasting screams from downstairs,
It may incinerate but cannot steal our memories,
But the burning pillar of crimson did not care.

The lives lost could have been saved,
There could have been sprinklers if the council had paid.

Advait Menon 10N

In response to the upcoming Nasa announcement On The Hunt For Life

Hope For Life

Are we the sole rosebud of a barren orchard?
The only oasis in an infinite desert,
A speck of light among a thousand shadows,
the lone symphony God will create and compose,

Do we foolishly glance into the infertile cosmos blinded by
hopeful visions?
Of Bustling civilisations over the horizon of the tranquil abyss,
Otherworldly beings whom among we may reside,
Merely looking outward to ignore the loneliness that stems inside,

Is our quest for life doomed to failure?
Life an accident never to be repeated,
An everlasting search for a non-existent item,
A foolish hope for an unforgiving wasteland

But what if there are mysteries we have not found?
Beyond our wildest dreams and fears,
Secrets that invisibly beckon us waiting to be discovered,
Whispers that silently speak wanting to be uncovered,

I say it is better to risk than to spend life in regret,
Hope makes us human we are naught without,
If the universe is infinite, we have infinite chances,
The longer the search, the greater the reward.

By Ansh Batura 10L

Tick Tock

Tick Tock goes the clock on this weapon of destruction,
Eager to unleash its volcanic eruption.
Fear, violence it will unleash it all,
Waiting with patience for the next to fall.

Angels above. Witnesses to this horrendous deed,
Fighting with devils, watching the depressing scene with heed.
The verdict reached. The damage done.
That fiery ball of plutonium shows mercy to no one.

The question that should be asked is why?
Why anyone would blow themselves up and die?
For religion, for freedom, whatever it may be,
Thousands dead on the floor. Oh! Is that freedom for you, for me?

As the smoke gathers around you, time is running out,
Your chance of survival has been dashed with doubt.
Dust attacking your lungs with mighty ferocity,
When will we escape this endless cycle of monstrosity?

Tick tock went the clock on that weapon of destruction,
Proud to have unleashed its volcanic eruption.
Thoughts rush through your mind, life’s highs and lows,
Then you take your last pain-filled breath as your eyes finally close.

Abigail Sheba 12Q

The Letter to Phyllis by Edwin Roberts

“Dear Phyllis,” I began to write,
“The end of our love is in sight
The days of trading precious moments are gone,
Our union broken, our marriage done.”
I promise to you I didn't want to upset her,
We could go our separate ways, live life for the better,
An explanation was due, I thought,
And mutual understanding would be my reward,
I enlisted a quill and some parchment to help
(Lest all manner of guilt did deal me a skelp!)
To tell her my sorrow, and regret and doubt,
That a love like hers could ever again come about,
I reminded her first of the times we shared,
Both fun and exhausting; the deeds we dared
Each other to do, like in the fields of wheat
(And now I hear her friend's in 10 Downing Street!)
I committed a page, then two, then three
To the years we spent sailing the sea
Back and forth across channels and ponds
To exotic lands, and joyful songs
But soon the anthem began to bore
And the eye of other women, I admit, I saw,
For Phyllis' song lost its spirit somehow,
And she mumbled and grumbled and fretted and frowned
The final straw did one night come
When her gold ran out, leaving me with a sum
Of debt to be paid. How unfair!
I couldn't possibly pay. I'm not a billionaire!
I told her I'd keep her safe and secure
Lest other men steal fair Phyllis' allure
But I knew from the staid welcome of her guests,
That for me, the party had ended, but I digress
Enough was enough. Time to leave.
I sealed the letter, hers to receive
But imagine my dread, growing greater and greater
To find fair Phyllis would still be my next door neighbour!

Shame by Raul Dudas-Lyne

1918 the extension of the franchise,
Lloyd George granted limited suffrage
To women. And since then Britain has been a true
Democracy. But since that glorious day,
And the equality that coincided with it,
Some of us have still been denied that most
Fundamental of rights, and have had our
Voice
Snatched away by the state.
Well I,
We, have some news for those among you who think
Our democracy can deny some their choice:
People who are 16 and 17 are just as smart as you!
I know it may wound your pride,
Or slight your ego,
Or even diminish that great self-worth built up within you,
But it is nonetheless true. And...
We deserve the vote just as much as
You do.
And guess what?
We make the right choice,
We don't vote Leave,
Nor do we vote for the
Bloody Difficult (meh, the DUP didn't find it so hard) Woman.
So not even giving MPs the vote on our vote,
Should prove a vote of no confidence in those who claim to be
Representatives in a representative democracy.
And as the Tories filibustered the vote on our future,
Labour cried 'shame',
And we do the same now!
If you want to fix the results of the next election,
Okay.
But know, when you lose,
And you will,
We will remember
And we will exercise our newly found right,
To act upon our remembrance, and keep you in
Opposition until cry shame at us.

Poverty Porn

You're watching TV in the comfort of your own home
When suddenly,
the adverts come on and you grumble out of frustration
The flow of mundanity has been disrupted
But then you see a malnourished child from an African nation feature in an advert.
Its heart-wrenching
Thought provoking
You immediately dial the on-screen number and donate £5.

Well done.

You've crossed off 'give money to a disadvantaged ethnic child' of your checklist.
You're a kind-hearted human being, you committed a selfless act without even having to leave the comfort of your own sofa.
You find yourself pitying third- world countries, deeming their inhabitants barbaric
Feeling sorry for them, for they have not experienced the 'dream' that is western living standards.

Congratulations are in order.

For you have utilised a colonial perspective that assumes certain identities need your financial help due to the temporary guilt you experienced upon seeing
a 30 second advert.
Your momentary heroics allows you to boast of your superior morality to your peers, because you took it upon yourself to disrupt your nightly routine and
contribute to a new school being built in an unknown African nation.
You're their knight in shining amour
The miniscule amount of light that transforms the entirety of their miserable lives.

1 month later you receive your bank statement, and spend a moment wondering what contributed to this £5 deduction.

But then you realise, you don't care.

By Ebum Adepaju

1 am.

The night is calm.
The first tendril of smoke
Winds its way up from the 4th floor.
There are no alarms.
No warning.

Instantly
The building is ablaze;
A single spark has unleashed
The almighty inferno.

Cladding
Made to look pretty
Now is greedily devoured.
Grenfell's scarred, tortured face reveals
The dirty truth beneath the scanty cladding:
The selfish sacrifice of safety for money.

Screams of panic
Echo through the building.
Not knowing whether life
Or death
Awaits.

The flames reach the roof;
They roar with glee.
Wrapping itself around the tower,
The inferno tightens its grip
On the fragile lives
Inside.

The 15th floor.
The woman and daughter are told to stay.
They wait
And wait.
No-one returns.
Now there is a choice:
The coiling smoke in the stairwell
Or the ravenous inferno outside?

Time is running out. The inferno draws closer.
They know
They must go.
"There is no turning back."

The blanket of smog
Blinds them;
Stabs at their eyes.
Towels are their only armour
Against the inferno's choking grasp.

The pair trip and stumble over
The bodies.
Limp and broken;
Littered across the stairwell
In the belly of the beast.

Heat presses
On their sweaty faces
Like a furnace.

In pitch darkness
Smoke choking them
The family descend.
Step
By agonising step.
Fear for their future;
Fear for their loved ones;
Fear for their lives.

The girl begins to cry
But the inferno throttles her throat
And she falls silent.

The mother staggers
And her child's hand
Slips
Away.

She screams her daughter's name
Until her voice
Is smothered by soot.
The inferno swallows
The most precious thing
In her life.

The mother may have survived
But her soul
Is still inside the tower.

The sun rises
To reveal a horror story.
It glows like a grotesque pumpkin;
Like coals in a fireplace
Doomed to burn.

Never forget –
Nor allow to recur:
The inferno.

By Matthew Perry

Diversity Program

They have changed the voice.
The tone, the clear enunciation, the trademark hesitation before the last word.
The Britishness.. the pure Britishness,
That says sorry,
As a ubiquitous utterance for a misjudgement of movement,
That lives it's duality,
Duly, during waking hours,
The pride in prudence,
Only to be awoken on Saturday night by a sweet bitter.
That thrives off those who do not hide,

Replaced with this cacophonous creation,
Spoken, no doubt, by a local tongue, a working-class voice for a working-class
audience,
To show inclusion, diversity,
Some other closeted term.

By Nebiy Daniel