

Section 209 CHAMPIONSHIP RECITATION – Age 15 to 18

Algerian Refugee Camp – (Ain-Khemouda)

By Alan Ross

You have black eyes,
Four years of age,
A chic, cast-off coat
- pepper-and-salt, double-breasted –
A label naming you 'Mohammed',
Some slippers, a squashed felt hat.
Nothing else. And 'nothing' means just that.

This camp is your home until – well, until.
A flag flaps on a hill.
The *oued* soon will be dry;
Do you know how to cry?

Smoke curls from the tents
Where women who are not your mother,
Hennaed and trinketed, cook.
Your eyes see but do not look.
And men who are not your father,
Turbaned and burned, sit stiff
In rows, like clay pigeons, on a cliff.
Targets do not easily relax.
Your hair is fair as flax.

Guns rattle the mauve hills
Where the last warmth spills
On villages where once you were
One of a family that died.
Not much else. Just that.

You pull down the brim of your hat.
Who knows what goes on inside?

SECTION 212 – Recitation AGE 15

Night Herons

by Judith Wright

It was after a day's rain:
the street facing the west
was lit with growing yellow;
the black road gleamed.

First one child looked and saw
and told another.

Face after face, the windows
flowered with eyes.

It was like a long fuse lighted,
the news traveling.
No one called out loudly;
everyone said "Hush."

The light deepened; the wet road
answered in daffodil colours,
and down its center
walked the two tall herons.

Stranger than wild birds, even,
what happened on those faces:
suddenly believing in something,
they smiled and opened.

Children thought of fountains,
circuses, swans feeding:
women remembered words
spoken when they were young.

Everyone said "Hush";
no one spoke loudly;
but suddenly the herons
rose and were gone. The light faded.

Glorious It Is

(Traditional Inuit* Arctic Circle)

Glorious it is to see
The caribou flocking down from the forests
And beginning
Their wanderings to the north.
Timidly they watch
For the pitfalls of man.
Glorious it is to see
The great herds from the forests
Spreading out over plains of white.

Glorious is it to see
Early summer's short-haired caribou
Beginning to wander.
Glorious to see them trot
To and fro
Across the promontories.
Seeking for a crossing place.

Glorious it is
To see great musk oxen
Gathering in herds.
The little dogs they watch for
When they gather in herds.
Glorious to see.

Glorious it is
To see the long-haired winter caribou
Returning to the forests.
Fearfully they watch
For the little people,
While the herd follows the ebb-mark of the
sea
With a storm of clattering hooves.
Glorious it is
When wandering time is come.

**Inuit people live in lands in and around the Arctic Circle such as Greenland, Canada, and Alaska.*

OR

SECTION 213 – Recitation AGE 14

The Frozen Man

by Kit Wright

Out at the edge of town
where black trees

crack their fingers
in the icy wind

and hedges freeze
on their shadows

and the breath of cattle,
still as boulders,

hangs in rags
under the rolling moon,

a man is walking
alone:

on the coal-black road
his cold

feet
ring

and
ring.

Here in a snug house
at the heart of town

the fire is burning
red and yellow and gold:

you can hear the warmth
like a sleeping cat

breathe softly
in every room.

When the frozen man
comes to the door,

let him in,
let him in,
let him in.

The Forest

by Miroslav Holub (*trans. I. Milner and G. Theiner*)

Among the primary rocks
where the bird spirits
crack the granite seeds
and the tree statues
with their black arms
threaten the clouds,

suddenly
there comes a rumble,
as if history
were being uprooted,

the grass bristles,
boulders tremble,
the earth's surface cracks

and there grows

a mushroom,

immense as life itself,
filled with billions of cells
immense as life itself,
eternal,
watery,

appearing in this world for the first
and last time

OR

SECTION 214 – Recitation AGE 13

Midnight Wood

by Raymond Wilson

Dark in the wood the shadows stir:
 What do you See? –
Mist and moonlight, star and cloud,
Hunchback shapes that creep and crowd
 From tree to tree.

Dark in the wood a thin wind calls:
 What do you hear? –
Fronde and fern and clutching grass
Snigger at you as you pass,
 Whispering fear.

Dark in the wood a river flows:
 What does it hide? –
Otter, water-rat, old tine can,
Bones of fish and bones of a man
 Drift in its time.

Dark in the wood the owlets shriek:
 What do they cry?
Choose between the wood and river;
Who comes here is lost forever,
 And must die!

Troll

by Jean Kenward

Under the bridge
 where the water flows
is a secret dwelling
 that no one knows –
dark and solemn
 the shadows stay,
with never a spark
 from the golden day.

Somebody told me
 once they saw
a slithery, slimy
 weed-wet door,
and the flick of a beard
 went in and out –
two bright, brown eyes
 and a turned-up snout.

Somebody whispered
 somebody said
a TROLL lives down on
 the river bed
and that's they place
 that he likes to be.

Somebody saw him . . .
 Was it me?

OR

SECTION 215 – Recitation AGE 12

Who?

by Charles Causley

Who is that child I see wandering, wandering
Down by the side of the quivering stream?
Why does he seem not to hear, though I call to him.
Where does he come from and what is his name?

Why do I see him at sunrise and sunset
Taking, in old-fashioned clothes, the same track?
Why, when he walks, does he cast not a shadow
Though the sun rises and falls at his back?

Why does the dust lie so thick on the hedgerow
By the great field where a horse pulls the plough?
Why do I see only meadows, where houses
Stand in a line by the riverside now?

Why does he move like a wraith by the water,
Soft as the thistledown on the breeze blown?
When I draw near him so that I may hear him,
Why does he say that his name is my own?

OR

My Gramp

by Derek Stuart

My gramp has got a medal.
On the front there is a runner.
On the back it says:
Senior Boys 100 Yards
First William Green
I asked him about it,
but before he could reply
Gran said, 'Don't listen to his tales.
The only running he ever did
was after the girls.'
Gramp gave a chuckle
and went out the back
to get the tea.
As he shuffled down the passage
with his back bent,
I tried to imagine him,
legs flying, chest out,
breasting the tape.
But I couldn't.

SECTION 216 – Recitation AGE 11

I've got a Cold

by Roger McGough

I've got a Cold
And it's not funny

My throat is numb
My nose is runny

My ears are burning
My fingers are itching

My teeth are wobbly
My eyebrows are twitching

My kneecaps have slipped
My bottom's like jelly

The button's come off
My silly old belly

My chin has doubled
My toes are twisted

My ankles have swollen
My elbows are blistered

My back is all spotty
My hair's turning white

I sneeze through the day
And cough through the night

I've got a cold
And I'm Going insane

(Apart from all that
I'm right as rain.

IT

by Eric Finney

It was huge,
It was enormous,
It came dripping from the sea:
It wobbled down the promenade,
It passed quite close to me!
It ruined all the flower-beds,
It upset an ice-cream stall,
It was like a giant jellyfish and
It had no eyes at all.
It cleared the paddling pool of kids,
Its feelers swung and swayed,
It seemed to like the fruit machines as
It oozed through the arcade.
It burst the turnstile on the pier as
It squeezed its grey mass through,
It left a horrid track behind –
It was like a trail of glue.
It reached the pier's end railings and
It forced them till they split.
It flopped back down into the sea and
It vanished. That was It.

OR

SECTION 217 – Recitation AGE 10

High Life

by Julie O'Callaghan

My home is on the eighty-ninth floor.
I live above the storms.

My windows are the cockpit
of an airplane that never flies.

The builders thought they were smart
but the wind is smarter
and I grow dizzy and weak
as I watch the water in my sink
flop back and forth
as we blow to and fro.

I grab the towel rack
to steady myself.

A wispy cloud
crashes through my living room wall

I scream over the phone
'What's the weather like down there?'

Waking Up

by Eleanor Farjeon

Oh! I have just had such a lovely dream!
And then I woke,
And all the dream went out like kettle-
steam,
Or chimney smoke.

My dream was all about – how funny,
though!
I've only just
Dreamed it, and now it has begun to blow
Away like dust.

In it I went – no! in my dream I had –
No, that's not it!
I can't remember, oh, it is *too* bad,
My dream a bit.

But I saw something beautiful, I'm sure –
Then someone spoke,
And then I didn't see it anymore,
Because I woke.

OR

SECTION 218 – Recitation AGE 9

Balloons!

by Judith Thurman

A balloon
is a wild
space animal,

restless pet
who bumps and butts
its head
on the cage walls
of a room –

bursts with a bellow,
or escapes slowly
with sighs
leaving a limp skin.

Balloons
on the street
fidget
in fresh air,
strain
at their string
leashes.

If you loose
a balloon,
it bolts home
for the moon.

Longing

by Richard Edwards

The small blue boat
Tugs on its rope,
Dying to be free,
While fins
And tins
And twigs
And sprigs
And tide
And glide
And eels
And keels
And whirls
And swirls
And sticks
And slicks
And litter
And glitter
And tails
And sails
And crates
And spates
And floats
And boats
And sweepings from the quay
Pass
Bobbing, prancing,
Ducking, dancing
Downstream to the sea

OR

SECTION 219 – Recitation AGE 8

Stegosaurus

by Wendy Larmont

I have a stegosaurus.
He's really rather sweet.
But he's very, very fussy
About the food he'll eat.

I offered him a burger,
A plate of egg and chips,
A dish of chicken curry,
But none would pass his lips.

I asked, 'What would be tasty?
I'll get it if I can.'
He said, 'I'd better tell you,
I'm a Vegetarian!'

OR

Mrs Mather

by Colin McNaughton

Scared stiff.
Courage flown.
On that doorstep all alone.
Cold sweat.
State of shock.
Lift my trembling hand and knock.

Thumping heart.
Chilled with fear.
I hear the witch's feet draw near.
Rasping bolts.
Rusty locks.
Shake down to my cotton socks.

Hinges creaking.
Waft of mould.
A groan that makes my blood run cold
Cracking voice.
Knocking knees
"Can I have my ball back please?"