

SECTION 210 – Championship Recitation AGE 15 to 18

In Midwinter a Wood Was by Peter Levi

In midwinter a wood was
where the sand-coloured deer ran
through quietness.
It was a marvellous thing
to see those deer running.

Softer than ashes
snow lay all winter where they ran,
and in the wood a holly tree was.
God, it was a marvellous thing
to see the deer running.

Between lime trunks grey or green
Branch-headed stags went by
silently trotting.
A holly tree dark and crimson
sprouted at the wood's centre, thick and high
without a whisper, no other berry so fine.

Outside the wood was black midwinter,
over the downs that reared so solemn
wind rushed in gales, and strong here
wrapped around wood and holly fire
(where deer among the close limes ran)
with a storming circle of its thunder.
Under the trees it was a marvellous thing
to see the deer running.

SECTION 213 – Poetry Recitation AGE 15

Sailor by Meg Seaton

How long ago?

More than a hundred years.
He was your grandad's grandfather, you know.
His mother died when he was six years old

And did he cry?

There would be tears.
So much remains untold.
Well-spoken, willing, trim,
at twelve he ran away,
shipped as a cabin boy, his letters say.

But why?

Oh, who can tell?
The sea encompassed him,
the brutish sea, its snarl his lullaby.
Sharp-slapping sail,
water and wind and sky
seasoned him well.
Teak hard and timber dry
he found odd harbourage between each gale,
for three decades scorched, froze
and then came home.

*What did he bring?
A mermaid's comb?*

Who knows?
A sea-salt thirst, tanned skin,
a knife scar down his side,
a coral spray, a ring –
but still within
his heart, so said his bride,
a gentleness. His mother's gift.
Who died.

OR

Bird in the classroom by Colin Thiele

The students drowsed and drowned
In the teacher's ponderous monotone –
Limp bodies looping in the wordy heat,
Melted and run together, desks and flesh as one,
Swooning and swimming in a sea of drone.

Each one asleep, swayed and vaguely drifted
With lidding eyes and lolling, weighted heads,
Was caught on heavy waves and dimly lifted,
Sunk slowly, ears ringing, in the syrup of his sound,
Or borne from the room on a heaving wilderness
of beds

And then, on a sudden, a bird's cool voice
Punched out song. Crisp and spare
On the startled air,
Beak-beamed
or idly tossed,
Each note gleamed
Like a bead of frost.

A bird's cool voice from a neighbour tree
With five clear calls – mere grains of sound
Rare and neat
Repeated twice. . .
But they sprang the heat
Like drops of ice.

Ears cocked, before the comment ran
Fading and chuckling where a wattle stirred,
The students wondered how they could have heard
Such dreary monotones from man,
Such wisdom from a bird.

SECTION 214 – Poetry Recitation AGE 14

Silence by Sally Carr

Silence is listening
The sudden awareness
of beauty and life.
The seeing beyond the range of vision.
The gossip of busy birds, the
movement of leaves, the wind of blowing.
Silence is the release of the senses
to absorb the beauty of nature, a
time to rest and pause from the
pace of living.
Silence is a time to meditate, reiterate
and decide.
Silence, is watching the clouds,
and floating with them.
The movement of waves, the gull
flying, the forsaken fisherman
on a lonely beach.
Silence is a gift of peace;
an inward music that dwells.
A stillness more alive in its
quietness
The mist shifting, the
dawn dawning and night creeping,
the spider's construction of his web . . .
An interval with life.
Silence. is our question and His reply.
Silence. is praying.

OR

The Empress's Cat *after Chang Tsu (660-741)* by FB

Long ago, the Empress Wu Tse-t'ien,
Seeking to show that where Buddha's law prevails
All violence and strife must cease,
Ordered that a kitten and a bird
Be trained to eat from the same dish.
The bird, a parrot, was clever and playful;
The cat, in turn, was placid and mild.
And indeed they did take their food together.
Yet when Censor P'eng exhibited them
To the officials at court
To manifest the transforming benevolence
Of Her Majesty's rule,
The cat became nervous, and bit
Her erstwhile comrade to death:
Thus in view of all could be concealed
Neither the violence of the cat
Nor the ambition of the ruler.

SECTION 215 – Poetry Recitation AGE 13

To a cat by A.C. Swinburne

Stately, kindly, lordly friend
 Condescend
Here to sit by me, and turn
Glorious eyes that smile and burn,
Golden eyes, love's lustrous meed,
On the golden page I read.

All your wondrous wealth of hair
 Dark and fair,
Silken-shaggy, soft and bright
As the clouds and beams of night,
Pays my reverent hand's caress
Back with friendlier gentleness.

Dogs may fawn on all and some
 As they come;
You, a friend of loftier mind,
Answer friends alone in kind.
Just your foot upon my hand
Softly bids it understand.

OR

Morning by Dionne Brand

Day came in
on an old brown bus
with two friends.
She crept down
an empty street
bending over
to sweep the thin dawn away.
With her broom,
in the corners
of the dusty sky
and finding a rooster still asleep,
prodded him into song.
A fisherman,
not far from the shore,
lifted his eyes,
saw her coming,
and yawned.
The bus rolled by,
and the two friends caught
a glimpse of blue
as day swung around a corner
to where the sea met a road.
The sky blinked,
woke up,
and might have changed its mind,
but day had come.

SECTION 216 – Poetry Recitation AGE 12

The cat by Richard Church

Hark! She is calling to her cat.
She is down the misty garden in a tatter-brim straw hat,
And broken slippers grass-wet, treading tearful daisies.
But he does not heed her. He sits still – and gazes.

Where the laden gooseberry leans over to the rose,
He sits, thorn-protected, gazing down his nose.
Coffee-coloured skies above him press upon the sun;
Bats about his mistress flitter-flutter one by one;

Jessamines drop perfume; the nightingales begin;
Night jars wind their humdrum notes; a crescent moon rides thin;
The daybird chorus dies away, the air shrinks chill and grey.
Her lonely voice still calls him – but her panther won't
 come in!

OR

The Wolf by Georgia Roberts Durston

When the pale moon hides and the wild wind wails,
And over the tree-tops the nighthawk sails,
The gray wolf sits on the world's far rim,
And howls: and it seems to comfort him.

The wolf is a lonely soul, you see,
No beast in the wood, nor bird in the tree,
But shuns his path; in the windy gloom
They give him plenty, and plenty of room.

So he sits with his long, lean face to the sky
Watching the ragged clouds go by.
There in the night, alone, apart,
Singing the song of his lone, wild heart.

Far away, on the world's dark rim
He howls, and it seems to comfort him.

SECTION 217 – Poetry Recitation AGE 11

Thickshakes by Steven Herrick

Years ago
in our old town
Dad would meet me
after school on Friday
and we'd walk
to the milk bar.
We'd both order the same –
hamburger with the works
and a vanilla thick shake
with a triple scoop of ice-cream.
We'd sit outside
on the plastic chairs
under the wattle trees
and it would take me
an hour to drink the shake
it was so thick.
Dad didn't mind.
He'd sit there
undo his tie
put his feet up on the fence
and watch me slurp the shake.
That was in our old town.

OR

On A Cat, Ageing by Sir Alexander Gray

He blinks upon the hearth-rug,
And yawns in deep content,
Accepting all the comforts
That Providence has sent.

Louder he purrs, and louder,
In one glad hymn of praise
For all the night's adventures,
For quiet restful days.

Life will go on forever,
With all that cat can wish,
Warmth and the glad procession
Of fish and milk and fish.

Only---the thought disturbs him---
He's noticed once or twice,
The times are somehow breeding
A nimbler race of mice.

SECTION 218 – Poetry Recitation AGE 10

Herbert Glerbett by Jack Prelutsky

Herbert Glerbett, rather round
swallowed sherbet by the pound.
fifty pounds of lemon sherbet
went inside of Herbert Glerbett.

With that glop inside his lap
Herbert Glerbett took a nap,
and as he slept, the boy dissolved,
and from the mess a thing evolved—

a thing that is a ghastly green,
a thing the world had never seen,
a puddle thing, a gooey pile
of something strange that does not smile.

Now if you're wise, and if you're sly
you'll swiftly pass this creature by,
it is no longer Herbert Glerbett,
Whatever it is, do not disturb it.

Coach by Eleanor Fargeon

There was a yellow pumpkin
Born on a pumpkin-patch,
As clumsy as a 'potamus,
As coarse as cottage-thatch.
It longed to be a gooseberry,
A green-gage, or a grape,
It longed to give another scent
And have another shape.
The roses looked askance at it,
The lilies looked away –
'This thing is neither fruit nor flower!'
Their glances seemed to say.

One shiny night of midsummer,
When even fairies poach,
A good one waved her wand and said,
'O Pumpkin! be a coach!'
A coach of gold! a coach of glass!
A coach with satin lined!
If you should seek a thousand years,
Such you would not find.
The Princess in her crystal shoes
Eager for the dance
Stepped inside the pumpkin-coach
And rolled to her romance.

The roses reached out after it
The lilies looked its way –
'O that we were pumpkins too!'
Their glances seemed to say.

OR

SECTION 219 – Poetry Recitation AGE 9

That Dog Next Door by John Himmelman

That dog next door
is big and hairy.
He growls and barks.
That dog is scary!
Bones lie scattered
around his feet.
The mailman's been missing
about a week.

It's time for a showdown.
It's him against me.
We look eye to eye.
We see what we see.

And that dog, he runs off!
He wasn't that mean.
Maybe next time I'll face him
with no fence in between.

OR

The Dentist by John Himmelman

The dentist is lurking behind the door.
My brother and I have dreaded this day.
We sit alone in the waiting room, waiting.

The dentist is drilling behind the door.
My brother and I hear him chipping away.
He's so proud of the holes he's creating.

The dentist is silent behind the door.
My brother and I duck behind the plants.
We know that our chances are slim.

"Who's next?" says the dentist, opening the door.
My brother and I exchange a glance.
And together we both say, "**HIM!**".

SECTION 220 – Poetry Recitation AGE 8

Always - by Finola Akister

Always it amazes me
How slippery the soap can be.
I pick it up and start to rub,
When WHOOSH – it jumps into the tub.
I search and search and search around:
That bar of soap just can't be found.
Instead of lying in the dish,
It's swimming round, just like a fish.
I cannot catch it – golly gosh,
I think I'll go without a wash.

OR

Something Is in There by Joan Himmelman

The closet door creaked.
I know it can't be,
but something is in there.
Something is in there.

I'll just take a peek.
It's too dark to see,
but something is in there.
Something is in there.

I slide a chair in front of the door.
"I know you're in there.
I know it!" I shout.
Something is in there.
Something is in there.
Something is in there,
but it's not getting out.