

Stages of Life

Poetry Anthology **2020**

Written by students in 8S



The Seven Ages - Megan

First comes the baby, so precious and special:
a sleeping infant full of peace,
dependent and young,
whimpering, whining, mewling like a kitten.
Secondly, the schoolgirl, impatient and active,
Her face lit up with a grin.
Eager, adventurous child,
full of strange stories and tales.
Next, the teenager, independent and bold:
a passionate girl – growing up
sensitive and self-aware and
desperate for a young lover.
And then the young adult,
fresh-minded and confident,
understanding and jubilant,
like a young lion-cub desperate to see the world.
After that comes the adult:
mature and intelligent;
supportive and successful;
educated and hard-working;
capable of anything.
Then the older generation,
frail and wise.
The gentle, wrinkled elderly -
so sweet and considerate.
Finally, the lost souls in heaven
who departed the world peacefully
and lie tranquil and still;
remembered, loved and at peace.



Childhood

'Oh the Joys of Childhood' - Esmerelda

Under the bridge,
The cracked, stone sky.
Over the river,
Splashing in the shattered mirrors.

Along the cobbled path,
Still faintly ghosted with chalk.
Across the poppy patch,
Treading lightly on the graves.

Around the circle of toadstools,
Waving politely to the goblins.
'Oh the joys of childhood'
We whisper as we look back.

Childhood is the best part of someone's life - Zahrah

Childhood is the best part of someone's life:
Playing outside, covered in mud!
One scream is all it takes
And your mum is there:
No responsibilities, not a care in the world.
Whenever I think of this
I wish I was a kid again.



The Little Face With Sorrow In His Eyes - Jas

This child's face showed the World of pain,
I saw in his eyes a mature, older man,
Hop-on-the-train-before-you-miss-it-time,
I saw the frozen bodies of the fallen Dead,
A metallic aroma hung in the air,
What was this sorrowful scene in his eyes?
Disheveled, burnt hair in an envelope,
I balanced his fallen heart, damaged in Battle,
I saw benches lined with poppies, covered with familiar names,
Khaki green encrusted fabrics lined the inside of the box,
Red, tart, wet droplets sank into my lips,
Colours burst in his eyes,
Like sting to my skin, I was free of the scene,
The vision was a frying-pan to my skull,
The infant held the memories of the future.



An Infant's Sweet Dreams – Vivienne

Sweet dreams for the infant that sleeps,
Small chest calmly heaving up and down -
Each little breath as delicate as bubbles floating into the blue sky
And as soft as an owl swooping down to catch its prey.

Sweet sleep may you have:
Thousands of magical dreams -
Each one a rainbow of color and as bright as golden stars
Shining in the dark night sky.

Sweet smiles you will give as you step into your wonderland of dreams -
Each tiny step you take, dainty flowers will spring;
Your steps as graceful as a butterfly flying in the countryside -
You are the spirit which keeps your world of dreams alive.

Slowly your dreams start to fade away as you gently open your clear round eyes and the sun peeps through a gap in the curtains.
Your tears are a river flowing down porcelain skin,
Landing lightly onto your fluffy pillow
As you open your mouth a tumult of noise comes out like the waves hitting sand on the beach.

A hand reaches out to comfort you,
Tenderly stroking your tearstained face
As you start to relax your crying starts to steady
And you know your sweet dreams will wait for you to come back to them.



An Empty Cradle - Alice M

The cradle lies empty, slowly rocking, rocked by
Your lost tomorrows
Rocked by my tears, rocked by our
Sorrows
Your screams and cries and
Smiles
Echo through my ears, but no one else hears -
Only me.

The empty scrapbook
Sighs
As the wind flutters the pages, all through the
Night -
Flicking though all the coulds and woulds and
What ifs,
Your first smile, sending
Shooting stars
Through the night, your
First woodland walk, wandering into the
Wonderland -

You were my light in the dark, my flicker
Of hope
But, like the silvery sheening star, winking
Through the night,
You were gone.
I built up my dreams to a blazing bonfire but
The spark went out, and now
I'm alone and I'm starting to freeze.

I wish I could see where this
All went wrong,
But the night is dark
And I can't see where I'm going, and I don't
Know where I belong
And now all that's left of the
Brightest star in the sky, is an
Empty cradle
Rocking itself through the
Night.



The Best Time - Esme

The classroom was like a sweetshop on a busy day,
The walls lined with dusty dictionaries,
Like jars on a shelf.
The whiteboard scribbled on carelessly,
Full of empty numbers and words that didn't mean anything in my head
My leg jiggled up and down in impatience,
Waiting and waiting.

There it was.
My favourite sound of the day.
The bell blared out its daily song,
Laughing through every inch of the school.
My eyes wandered away from the dreary board,
As I raced out the classroom before the teacher could even announce the best part of the day.

I hopped down the burning hot stairs,
The sun beaming down onto the concrete paradise,
Where battered balls hid peacefully in sheds,
Trying to avoid the kicks they got on summer's days,
And skipping ropes were splayed out on the floor,
Knotted like shoelaces.
This was the best time;
It was breaktime.



School - Izzy

Waiting for the bus, feeling like I'm in an ice bath,
dread crawling over me like thousands of tiny bugs;

Sat in lessons, watching the hands on the clock move
like sloths having a race, feeling like I'm in a queue;

Lunch, sat with my friends, other people's conversations
drifting like clouds overhead;

Waiting for the bus again,
excitement flying off me like butterflies.



A Paper World of Monsters – Emily M

The steel chair caged him, the feel of it pressing into his arms,
Trapped him, “Go on,” she said, “draw,” she said. She sighed, “Like yesterday.”
He glanced down at the blank sheet A4; its plainness bore into his eyes.
The boy’s trembling hand picked up the pencil, the gleaming stick of rock candy,
And he placed the tip of it on the now dark paper, her shadow
cast over him. The pencil started to dance in his fingers.

He drew what he saw: the world in its reds and blues, the fallen trees,
The busy roadsides and he drew the people, all of them as they were
Standing in the food bank lines, sobbing on the doorsteps of the armies of salvation,
He drew them as they waited, waited for him to draw more, so he did.
Freedom flowed down his frail wrist, all into this world he had made.
The teacher put her hand on the paper, smudging the unemployment queues,
“All done now?” she asked.

“No”

Her hand bounced off the page, and he drew furiously at the top of the paper.
The people looked up trying to see what he was drawing, but they couldn’t see.
Neither could the teacher.

He lifted his hand up and there it was, a monster with big murderous spikes on its back,
bright orange eyes like headlights and a shark and a crocodile for arms.
Its diamond studded teeth grinned up at her and she screamed.
The shark reached up and out of the page as if to SHHHH her, like she had so often done.
It dragged her into his world. She saw, what he saw now.

She cried and looked up to the sky,
and saw the boy. Smiling.



Young Adult

The Day I Decided My Life - Ella P

The long confusing words on my page
Make my thoughts whirl in my head.
My friend sat beside me,
Daydreaming,
She sank deeper and deeper into her chair
Almost like her chair had gobbled her up.

My hand quickly scribbled down the translation

Making my pen dance across the page
My mini messy notebook
Fluttered to life.

The dusty, oversized laptop in front of them
Hot and sticky with use
Whirring with answers

I sat there thinking
What a fine life this could be.



When I am older, what shall I be? - Sarah

I could dive into the mind of little five-year-old me:
Become a perfect pretty princess
parading around my perfect, pretty palace.

I could fly to the moon with my nine-year-old self,
Be as adventurous as an astronaut:
Spacewalk on Saturn;
Befriend aliens on Venus.

I could perform pirouettes and jeté like twelve-year-old me;
Wear tutus in glittering shades of purple and pink and blue;
Turn and leap and perform all day.

I could create my own future,
Design a new world with fourteen-year-old me,
Engineer mesmerising solar-powered 'planes,
And a 'phone to teleport you to wherever you want to be.

Or maybe I should see where the future takes me.

To Mars or to Morocco!
Instead of wasting my adolescence in a frenzy about the future,
I could use it to discover my passions.
Perhaps I should go
One step at a time
And say to myself, 'When I am older, who knows what I shall be?'



The Lionhearted Soldier - Trinity

From what was once a helpless chick,
Shielded from danger and harm,
In his mother's cosy and snug pouch,
Whining when desperate for food and attention,

Transitioning from a tadpole to a frog, stepping into the world of independence,
Communicating as though he was a spy, with a secret language only understood by "teens"
Extremely misunderstood, a toddler once again,
A wave, knocked down often by others,
Evolving into a tsunami, destroying himself and others in his catastrophic path -

Eventually bloomed a lionhearted, fearless soldier.
He migrated from base to base,
Putting all his pride first,
Fighting for the supreme accolade: the watering hole!

But as the caterpillars turned into butterflies,
The lionhearted soldier was forgotten like a dream:
His glory days were just something to reminisce about,
Gone like a friend long-since lost.

His intrepid skin was shed through bravery and valour,
A warrior was left behind from the thrilling adventure,
A rejected hunch able to grow whiskers of truth, no wise beard,
Just a wrinkled slug, hibernating in his armchair.

Motionless he lay, recalling the soothing hum of his mother,
Curious if he would see her soon, in paradise where God resides.
His heart beats grew further apart, like himself and his mother as he matured.
Silence was released, like the impact of bombs on the battlefield;
His thoughts turned into his spirit, that haunted his son.



The Soldier - Jessica L

The soldier stood stiff with fear,
Gazing on ahead.
If you looked into his deep blue eyes, you could see inside his head.

He could see his family huddled around the fire,
1000 miles away.
He could see his friend lying still among the withered flowers,
Left 10 miles away.
He could see the enemy coming close,
Only a mile away.

But now he can hardly see,
As he turns away to flee.



Forever Gone - Ella A

His blood was spilling everywhere,
His blood.
Dust had completely filled the air,
His life. Gone.
I blame myself for his death,
His fun.
I just swept away his last breath,
Why?
I remember the day I first met him,
He was eleven and weak,
He didn't talk,
Not a word the whole week.
His voice was small,
But he soon learned how to play,
The war.

Then the bombs.
Falling from the sky like rain,
He was hurt.
Why him?
He grew weaker,
Making little sound,
As quiet as a mouse,
Then nothing.
He was gone.
Up to the happy home of heaven,
Forever Gone.



This – Emily W

Hiking up,
my life in lockdown to secure my future,
friends, family, fun falling behind,
down, down, down.

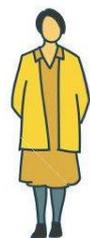
Pen to paper, foot to sand,
what is the difference anymore?

No more.

When I put down my dreams,
they keep on walking, stamping,
am I a ghost?

The sun weighing me down,
laughter now at me,
a bubble of must and want to be,
lost everything.

For this.



Next - Jess D

My aching feet trudge through the oozing mud,
Each day is the same,
Always the same drills and orders.
We grasp our guns,
And get ready to fight,
In the battle that we didn't make.

I don't want to be here,
Fighting every day.
This is not right.
They fire again and again,
The bullets rain over us,
We scramble and dodge trying to avoid them.
People come and people go,
Never saying goodbye.

I did this for my country, to make people proud,
But here I am killing innocent people
Like I have no dignity.

They have a life like mine,
with children and a wife,
and a humble abode.
But this awful battle,
It's killing it all.

I hope I'm not next,
Like Barry or Tim.
I want to come home and make people proud;
I will appreciate every day and every breath,
Because I don't want to be next.



The Soldier - Samaira

His face appeared blank but his eyes looked restrained,
Bodies of deceased fallen soldiers surrounded him,
The untimely deaths of those he held close to him and the deep wounds he suffered,
Caused him to endure the feelings of anguish, grief and agony alone;
His heart fallen, crushed in battle.
A sickening, metallic odour was in the air,
Wilted flowers, once vibrant and healthy now soaked in blood,
Thoughts of his family still lingered in his mind,
Aware that he wouldn't see them again.
The colour seemed to fade from his sleep-deprived eyes,
Bitter, wet tears rolled down his face,
His vision was blurred so he fled,
But nevertheless, he would soon end up dead.



Apart - Natasha

The moment a mother's son is called off to war,
Tears well up in her eyes,
Putting on a mask of steel and having a hopeful heart,
As the ship slowly swims away,
Across the endless lengths of ocean.

A young man curled up on a bench,
His head in his knees hiding his weakness
As he readies himself to start something new,
The feeling of home lost far in the past,
His attention turns to the fog in the future.

The old detached from his mind.
Halted, they stand in an orderly line,
Waiting for orders from the superior man,
With orders received they must carry on.
Marching and marching through many brick walls.

Trudging along through thick dense forest,
Clouds hiding the sky with light passing by,
Continuing on to find battle ahead,
They started to die once they had finally stopped,
Ten thousand young soldiers sinking like moles,

The bullets rocketing towards them,
It all begins.
Enemies crawling closer,
Safety forgotten and a medal coming towards him,
He charges towards them in hope of victory,

You fall into the trenches,
Your leg drenched in blood,
A Sergeant comes closer,
And compliments your bravery,
He offers time off for a couple of weeks.

Back along the familiar roads,
Following the winding of the track,
With dust blowing in your face,
A mother seen once again,
Forgotten in time.

The son back with his family,
Scarred and rigid with blood on his hands,
He still must return to the horrors of war,
And the mother lost in darkness again,
Forever.



War Poem - Elodie

You see the punch-drunk celebrations,
Sighs of relief, grief non-existent,
Anthems for the heroes and fallen alike,
Families reunited, eyes shine bright,

Friends slapping backs, brothers and sisters,
The shaky smiles and young lovers' kiss,
But there are the ones who slink away
To a darkened room where they won't be missed.

You don't see the young man, fire in his eyes'
Tears fear, and smoke in the trenches of his mind:
Legs tangled in sheets, mind tangled in nightmares,
Breathing like he's still on a field, 100 miles from home.

Or the girl who knows too well that if you get called "monster" long enough
You become one, only to see that the open arms have closed.
Running to where no one knows her, or what she did -
Someplace where the water is clean enough to wash the blood off.

And you don't see the little boy, ginger hair stained red,
Lying in the ring of ashes that were his life,
His halo is one of blood,
Burnt socks lie on the road beside his broken body,

The three girls who wish they could have done something,
Landscape of bombs in the sky, bodies in the sea
Now they even share nightmares and scars
This life they know is a living tragedy.

Then the one who they think worst off of all
Spending her nights screaming her mind out -
Right out of the hell she is trapped in;
She only hears the music when her heart begins to break.

Holding hands, to block out reality;
What they've seen makes up infinity,
Blazing eyes show lost humanity,
As they all ring round the gravestones, wondering if the dead are better off



Love - Georgie

I'm back in the hospital ward,
For what seems like the 270th time.
It's inconvenient and boring but sometimes they tell me something,
That makes it all worth it, makes my day, makes my month,
And it gets me closer to the day, that will make my year, make my life;
The little peanut in my tummy will become forever mine.
The day she will be real flesh and bone, and I can hold her in my arms.
Margaret comes with me, and I with her,
This life was our dream, to have our babies together,
And it's happening, in real life.
And in 4 appointments more, my peanut should be here.

4,
3,
2,
1,

My peanut,

My Sarah.

We watch them as they grow, he teaches her the monkey bars,
She teaches him picture books.
They're like siblings, but not at all,
They love each other endlessly.
There's that word 'love'
Love, they definitely feel like that,
But what is love? Brotherly love, friendly love, of love.
The love that never starts and never ends, it's just there
And can never be taken away.

Even in the age of cooties and learning,
And everyone around them sticking to themselves,
Because they find others gross, they still had that love.
They didn't want to be apart.
Even in the ages of weddings in the garden,
They never got married to anyone, even with many proposals,
Not even each other, they couldn't look each other in the eye for weeks.
Even in the age of boyfriends and girlfriends and first kisses.
They loved but in a special way, we couldn't define,
No-one could.

Even when they go away to college, they go together.
We're not surprised when they come back,
Holding hands with kisses and hugs,
Travelling from one house to the other, staying together.
And then at the Easter holiday, when she comes home with a beautiful rock on her finger,
At her wedding, when they announce they're about to have a peanut,
And that's when I realised, there's another type of love.
Parental love, from the day you're expecting to the day you go,
Where you miss them when they go, love them when they come back,
And accept everyone they love, because you extend yourself for them.
Helping them to love, to grow, but never giving up.
Where you love them so much, you see past all the negatives,
And you rejoice that they finally get the feeling of love.
Every type, Brotherly, Friendly, Parental.
Or the endless type that never starts and never ends,
That can only be defined by one word:
Love.



Roses - Maya

Roses are sweet,
Solemn and tall.
But still
Dangerous.
Sharp.
Our love
Blossomed
Like a flower.
Time will wither
Away at
Our rose.
But if you
Picked it
Young,
Blood.
Red.
Just like
Roses.
Sweet,
Solemn and tall.



Adulthood

Now, you are - Elise

There was a melting grey carpet outside.
Your nose pressed against the stained-glass windows;
Your eyes were shooting lasers,
Staring, staring, staring
At the most dedicated droplets as they ran
Down
The slippery shimmering stained glass.

Now, you are not
Pressing sweaty noses.
Now, you are the dedicated droplet:
Running as far away from the deadline so that it will
Never catch up.

Then, another nose joins yours on the glass
His breaths are heavy: each is a prolonged sigh
Their eager emerald eyes take
One
Long, extended stare
Into your innocent diamond ones
But innocent stares quickly turned into dangerous glares.

Now, you are not
Joined by anyone. But
Now, you are wishing you were,
Because, you think, running is not as fun when you're
Alone.

Your "friends" asked you what the answer was.
You couldn't hear them;
When you looked outside, all the branches were waving at
You.
They asked you again.
"I don't know."
Just like that the conversation was over.

Now, you are not
Wondering whether to lie,
Because there is no one to lie to.

Now, you are punching the keys on your keyboard;
The letters fade away and it reminds you of how
Quickly your childhood faded too.

The cap on your head signified the end
Of one stage.
The bills on your table meant there was
No break
In between
Them.

Now, you are not
Telling people the answers
Now, you are the one asking.



Later Stages of Life

Differences - Abi

The stage before my grave -
Ghostly face and elephant skin,
Scars that paint my face and don't erase.
All I want is my youth again:

Soft smooth skin;
Blonde wavy hair;
All the attention they want!
That's all I really want.

I have always wanted to fly
But can't even walk to the shop
without my hip and back
giving up!
I want to walk; I want to be free.
In my youth I was the fastest cheetah -

Now I am the fastest snail
If that is even a thing!
Why is it like this?
Why can't I just enjoy my life?
End of life.

In Times of Trouble – Alice C

In times of trouble:
All pensioners must
Stay under a roof
It is a law
All shall abide by.

Our universe is unbalanced -
Heed my words
Hasty young adults
Urgently grasping rations
Like starved hounds
Ready to pounce at their prey,
I can tell you

The End - Bella

Everything is blurry
Everything is out of focus
Snap shot of my life, surrounding
me
An album

Vignettes come chasing me
Saturation fading
Filters falling

Years and years
Memories passing
But
Everything is blurry



We old mortals
Obtain more calmness
Than you
In times of trouble.
Souls are passing
As a result of oblivious
Young people
Meeting their pals and buddies
Absentminded towards these times.
This destructive virus
Will not
Stop.
Unless we stay at home.
We can control this,
We will bring Covid 19 to a grinding
Halt.

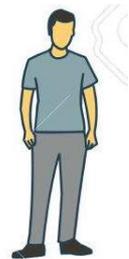


The Final Stage - Evie

So now it's time for the last scene of all,
The inevitability of death grew closer and closer,
A life gone in the blink of an eye.
Final thoughts of love lost, passing regrets, friendships unexplored, words unspoken, petty quarrels
and unfulfilled dreams.
Where are the long lazy days, that stretched endlessly ahead?

Now as the end draws near, a realisation that time was the gift he did not value.
How precious those lost moments look now.
His reflection mocking him, turned from youthful exuberance to something he no longer recognised:
Skin sallow as a trodden marsh,
crumbling teeth like an eroding cliff tumbling into the sea
and shiny skin where hair once grew so vigorously.
Shallow breaths leave his body as he prepares to submit himself to the dark cold hand that death
proffers.
His timetoleavetime, timetosaygoodbyetime and timetomeethismakertime.

What welcome awaits? The warm smile of his mother, the cold hand of another?
Or cloven hoof?
His nightmares a suffocating smog of misdeeds
The seeds had been sewn, good or bad, now judgement day
A cold sweat, in anticipation of fire, or worse,
nothing?
No mind to look back, and no stomach for what comes next.
Fear of the unknown, choking his last words,
The empty theatre, echoing each desperate plea.
Please, I'm not ready.



Fading - Alexa

Much-used stick leaning on the chair,
Hopeless spectacles on the china cabinet,
Aged books with illegible words,
All fading into oblivion.

Comforting chiming of the old church clock,
Continuous creaking of rotting floorboards,
Background whining of antique radiator,
Fading into oblivion.

Faint scent of old leather settees,
Lingering ghosts in thin layers of dust,
Distinct aromas into heavy musk merging,
Fading oblivion.

Vanishing trace of the new children's zoo,
Hazy breath of an original comic,
Fleeting whisp of rattling conkers,
Oblivion.



The Good Old Days - Sophia

They say old age's golden,
I should cherish it,
While I can,
Yet,
I can't help but remember,
The years I was so full of life,
The good old days.

The days when,
I could swing my legs out of bed,
I could walk to work,
And cycle back.
The days when
I'd laugh without hurting,
And cry without breaking.
The good old days.

But now,
I struggle out of bed,
There's no work to walk to,
I'm too stiff to cycle.
Who's there to laugh with?
Who's there to calm my tears?
I can't help but think about
The good old days.

The days when
My looks were good,
And I could see when they weren't.
And, when at the end of the day I'd go to bed.
Happy,
With my husband by my side.
The good old days.

But now,
My clothes hang loose around my elephant skin.
I go to bed early
Put my ears in a drawer,
My eyes on a shelf,
And clean my hands with sanitiser,
Before putting my teeth in a jar.
I fall asleep
Sad and,
Alone.
With nothing to think about but
The good old days.



The Granny - Maddie

The linen, hideous, lemon armchair glowing in the living room,
And the oversized rollers in her brittle grey hair.
The beaming smile painted across her face,
And her warm bubbling heart.
Her dented, rickety stick, worn down at the base,
And glossy book full of memories old and new.
That's granny, she doesn't care, that's just who she is.

Wrapped in leathery wrinkled skin,
Gingerly limping on her frail arms and legs.
Always asking strange questions with an intrigued look on her face.
She is never in a rush as she wanders around her house,
Her floral blouses and floating skirts,
With powdery makeup creased in her skin and clumps of mascara on her nose.
That's granny, she doesn't care, that's just who she is.

Heavily plodding down the narrow corridors,
Her broken blue eyes glisten through her sellotaped half-moon spectacles,
As she heard the angelic cries and giggles through the door.
She cradled the bundles that tightly wrapped her new-born grandson,
Cold fat tears rolled as she planted a soft kiss on his head and hummed,
"I'm your granny, I don't care, that's just who I am,
I'll spoil you rotten for as long as I can."



Slipping Away - Scarlett

Ink spilt across the sky,
His eyes fell heavy,
He slid away into a dream,
As he slept a crack of light wandered into the room,
Then with hushing sounds,
It slipped away.

He dreamt about what he could be,
The world was his oyster,
And he the shining pearl,
Wisps of things he could only imagine,
All slipped away.

Outside the room the stars shone brightly,
Brighter than the moon,
A dark presence floated over them,
The stars slipped away.

Everything was dark,
Everything was silent,
Everything had slipped away.





Where next?

Submit your poem in a competition:

<https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/submit-poem-entry>

<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/education/poetry-competitions/foyle-young-poets-of-the-year-award/>

<http://www.writingeastmidlands.co.uk/young-writers/solstice-prize-2020/>

<https://www.neversuchinnocence.com/2019-20-competition>

Turn it into an extended piece of writing and enter a short story competition:

<https://www.wilbur-niso-smithfoundation.org/index.php/awards/author-of-tomorrow>

READ MORE POETRY!!! <https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/anthology/>