

ARKLOW MUSIC FESTIVAL

POEMS 2025

Age 5

Night Fright by Marian Swinger

My hair stood on end
And I trembled with fright
When I heard a strange noise
On the stairs in the night.
"CREAK", it went.
"EEK", I went.
What should I do?
Then my brother
Leaped into my room
And yelled, "BOO!"

After a Bath by Aileen Fisher

After my bath
I try, try, try
to wipe myself
till I'm dry, dry, dry.

Hands to wipe
and fingers and toes
and two wet legs
and a shiny nose.

Just think how much
less time I'd take
if I were a dog
and could shake, shake, shake.

AGE 5

Silly to Fuss By Max Fatchen

Why must I wash behind my ears?
That's what I want to know.
Why can't I wash hands and knees?
Places that really SHOW.
Who's going to look behind my ears?
It seems so odd to fuss.
Besides, I think it's a waste of soap...
Oh well, all right!...If I MUST!

One-eyed Jack by Shel Silverstein

One eyed-Jack, the pirate chief
Was a terrible, fearsome
Ocean thief.
He wore a peg
Upon one leg.
He wore a hook,
And a dirty look.
One eyed-Jack, the pirate chief,
A terrible, fearsome, ocean thief.

AGE 6

The Wrong Start

by Marchette Chute

I got up this morning and meant to be good,
But things didn't happen the way that they should.

I lost my toothbrush,
I slammed the door,
I dropped an egg
On the kitchen floor,
I spilled some sugar
And after that,
I tried to hurry
And tripped on the cat.

Things may get better.
I don't know when.
I think I'll go back and start over again.

The Bee By Rose Fyleman

"I'm busy, busy, busy" said the bee,
"I shan't be home to dinner or to tea,
It'll take me HOURS and HOURS
To visit all the flowers;
I'm very, very busy" said the bee.
"I'm busy, busy, busy" said the bee,
"I haven't got a single second free.
It makes me rather dizzy,
And a little wizzy-wizzy,
- To be so very busy" said the bee.

Age 6

A Verse About Me

By Hilda Rostron

I'm scrubbing my teeth,
Scrub, scrub.

I'm washing my hands,
Rub, rub.

I'm brushing my hair,
Brush, brush.

I'm climbing upstairs,
Hush, hush.

I'm going to bed,
Creep, creep.

I'm in bed...

Yawn, Yawn, Yawn,
Asleep.

OUR CAT By Daphne Lister

Our cat likes apple crumble,
With or without cream,
She eats it though I've told her
That it will make her dream,
And sometimes she eats custard,
Though it's sure to make her fat,
Then she purrs and licks her whiskers
And thinks,
'What a lucky cat!'

AGE 7

Flying By J. M. Westrup

I saw the moon,
One windy night,
Flying so fast—
All silvery white—
Over the sky
Like a toy balloon
Loose from its string—
A runaway moon.
The frosty stars
Went racing past,
Chasing her on
Ever so fast.
Then everyone said,
“It's the clouds that fly,
And the stars and moon
Stand still in the sky.”
But I don't mind—
I saw the moon
Sailing away
Like a toy balloon.

Acorn and Oak by Paul King

“Oh I'll never be big,” the acorn said
As it gazed on high to the oak tree tall,
“I'm little and round as a miller's
thumb,
I'll never be big, I'll always be small.”
The oak tree smiled a knowing smile,
“My trunk is thick, and my roots are
deep,
My branches and twigs spread high
and wide,
For birds to nest in, and bugs to sleep.
But I was an acorn too on a time,
- ‘Oh I'll never be big, I'll never be
strong,’-
That's what I thought many years
ago...
And, dear little acorn, you see I was
wrong!”

Age 7

The Turtle by Anon

There was a little Turtle
Who lived in a box,
He swam in a puddle
And he climbed on the rocks.

He snapped at a mosquito
He snapped at a flea,
He snapped at a minnow
And he snapped at me.

He caught the mosquito
He caught the flea
He caught the minnow
But he didn't catch me.

New Shoes by Anon

My shoes are new and squeaky shoes,
They're shiny, creaky shoes.

I wish I had my leaky shoes
That my mother threw away.

I liked my old brown leaky shoes
Much better than these creaky shoes,
These shiny, creaky, squeaky shoes
I've got to wear today.

AGE 8

I Tried to Take a Selfie --Kenn Nesbitt

I tried to take a selfie
when I was all alone
I never should have done it.
It broke my mobile phone.
I guess I'm not so pretty.
I thought that I was cuter.
I snapped one with my laptop
and busted the computer.
I cracked my father's camera.
My mother's iPad too.
This shouldn't be so difficult
I don't know what to do.
At last I got a selfie;
perhaps the worst one yet.
I posted it online today.
It broke the Internet.

The Lion By Roald Dahl

The lion just adores to eat
A lot of red and tender meat,
And if you ask the lion what
Is much the tenderest of the lot
He will not say a roast of lamb
Or curried beef or devilled ham
Or crispy pork or corned beef hash
Or sausages or mutton mash.
Then could it be a big plump hen?
He answers no. What is it, then?
Oh, lion dear, could I not make –
You happy with a lovely steak?
Could I entice you from your lair
With rabbit –pie or roasted hare?
The lion smiled and shook his head.
He came up very close and said,
“the meat I am about to chew
Is neither steak nor chops. IT'S YOU.”

A BAD CASE OF SNEEZES

- by Bruce Lansky

Last night I had the sneezes.
I was really very ill.
My mother called the doctor
who prescribed a purple pill.

At eight o'clock I went to bed.
My mom turned out the light.
I used up one whole box of Kleenex
sneezing through the night.

I sneezed my brains out in my bed.
I didn't get much rest.
So that's the reason, teacher,
that I flunked the spelling test.

Ruling the world By Sandra Horn

I should like to rule the world;
I think it's my turn now
I could make things so much better
And I'm going to tell you how;
I'd melt down all the guns and bombs
And all those evil things
And turn them into bicycles
And carousels and swings.
Turn them into roller skates
And bongo drums and bells,
Make spinning tops and glockenspiels
From all the tanks and shells.
Fill all the world with happy things
That make a happy noise;
Shout it all around the earth:
Don't make war, make toys !

Age 9
The Pet

By Tony Bradman

My mum gave me some money
To buy myself a treat;
She said I could buy anything
(so long as it wasn't sweets).

So off I went to spend it.
I wandered round the shops,
I couldn't find a thing to buy...
Then something made me stop.

There in a pet shop window
I saw a flash of fire;
I saw some scales and burning eyes
And I knew my heart's desire.

I gave the man my money.
He handed me a lead.
Then I walked out of the pet shop
With the only pet I need.

A pet with wings and gleaming fangs,
With skin that's shiny green;
With claws and a tail that's longer
Than any tail you've seen.

A pet whose breath is orange flame,
Whose ears both hiss with steam,
Who'll fly me to the land of clouds
And to the land of dreams.

But first I'd better go home.
I hope that's OK...
I hope my mum will like my pet.
I wonder what she'll say....

Age 9

Trees are Great by Roger Mc Gough

Trees are great, they just stand and
wait
They don't cry when they're teased
They don't eat much and they seldom
shout
Trees are easily pleased.

Trees are great, they like to
congregate
For meetings in the park
They dance and sway, they stay all
day
And talk till well after dark.

Trees are great, they accept their fate
When it's pouring down with rain
They don't wear macs, it runs off their
backs
But you never hear them complain.

So answer me please, if there weren't
any trees
Where would naughty boys climb?
Where would lovers carve their
names?
Where would little birds nest?
Where would we hang the leaves?

AGE 9

JUST LIKE A MAN

by John Keats

He sat at the dinner table
With a discontented frown,
The potatoes and steak were
underdone
And the bread was baked too brown,
The pie was too sour and the pudding
too sweet,
And the roast was much too fat;
The soup so greasy, too, and salt,
'Twas hardly fit for the cat.

"I wish you could eat the bread and pie
I've seen my mother make,
They're simply great, and 'twould do
you good
Just to sample a loaf of her cake,"
Said the smiling wife, "I'll improve
with age -
Just now I'm just a beginner,
But your Mother has come to visit us,
And to-day she cooked the dinner."

AGE 9

THE 'VEGGY' LION
by Spike Milligan

I'm a vegetarian Lion,
I've given up all meat,
I've given up all roaring,
All I do is go tweet-tweet.

I never ever sink my claws
Into some animal's skin,
It only lets the blood run out
And lets the germs rush in.

I used to be ferocious,
I even tried to kill!
But the sight of all that blood
Made me feel quite ill.

I once attacked an Elephant,
I sprang straight at his head.
I woke up three days later
In a Jungle hospital bed.

Now I just eat carrots,
They are easier to kill,
'Cos when I pounce upon them,
They all remain quite still!

Age 10

**“Grandma’s On The Internet”
By Dulcie Meddows**

Grandma’s on the internet.
She won’t give us a go.
They say she’s net addicted, Mum,
It’s possible you know.
I was only reading yesterday
How older women are affected
They get online in the chatroom
And it’s like they’re disconnected!
First it’s for an hour, and next
They can’t drag themselves away.
Mum! Gran’s been on the internet
Over fifteen hours today!
Aren’t you worried about her mental
health
And that she hasn’t had a bath?
She’s skipping meals.
She doesn’t sleep. Muuum!
We’re serious, don’t laugh.
We’re sorry now, we showed her how
To surf the internet.
Oh well.... We’ll ride her skateboards.
That’ll serve her right, I’ll bet!

Age 10

**Trees are Great
by Rodger Mc Gough**

Trees are great, they just stand and
wait They don't cry when they're
teased
They don't eat much and they seldom
shout
Trees are easily pleased.

Trees are great, they like to
congregate
For meetings in the park
They dance and sway, they stay all
day
And talk till well after dark.

Trees are great, they accept their fate
When it's pouring down with rain
They don't wear macs, it runs off their
backs
But you never hear them complain.

So answer me please, if there weren't
any trees
Where would naughty boys climb?
Where would lovers carve their
names?
Where would little birds nest?
Where would we hang the leaves?

AGE 10

OR:

I'd like to be a teabag,
and stay at home all day
and talk to other teabags
in a teabag sort of way.

I'd love to be a teabag,
and lie in a little box
and never have to wash my face
or change my dirty socks.

I'd like to be a Tetly bag,
an Earl Grey one perhaps,
and doze all day and lie around
with Earl Grey kind of chaps.

TEABAG

I wouldn't have to do a thing,
no homework, jobs or chores –
just lie inside a comfy box
of teabags and their snores.

I wouldn't have to do exams,
I needn't tidy rooms,
or sweep the floor, or feed the cat
or wash up all the spoons.

I wouldn't have to do a thing –
A life of bliss, you see...
except that once in all my life

I'd make a cup of tea.

Peter Dixo

AGE 10

Tee Vee by Eve Merriam

In the house
of Mr and Mrs Spouse
he and she
would watch teevee
and never a word
between them spoken
unit the day
the set was broken.

Then 'How do you do?'
said he to she
'I don't believe
that we've met yet.
Spouse is my name.
What's yours?' he asked.

'Why, mine's the same!'
said she to he,
'Do you suppose that we could be - ?'

But the set came suddenly right about,
and so they never did find out

AGE 11

The Time Machine

By Richard James

Roll up, roll up, and on you climb
I'll take you travelling back through
time
I'll show you things you've never seen.
All aboard my time machine!

Count down from ten. We're off so fast
That years and years are whizzing
past.
We've stopped. Where are we? In a
wood.
A man in green: it's Robin Hood!

And off again through history,
Let's stop in forty-five BC.
Look! Romans marching to and fro
They don't look friendly. Time to go.

And further back and further back
We land now on a forest track.
No human footprints on the ground.
No people yet, so what's that sound?

A crash, a grunt, a groan, a roar -Look
out!
A long lost dinosaur!
Quick, back on board, count down
from ten
Phew, Just in time, we're home again.

AGE 11

The Sea By James Reeves

The sea is a hungry dog,
Giant and grey.
He rolls on the beach all day.
With his clashing teeth and shaggy
jaws Hour upon hour he gnaws
The rumbling, tumbling stones,
And 'Bones, bones, bones, bones!'
The giant sea-dog moans,
Licking his greasy paws.
And when the night wind roars
And the moon rocks in the stormy
cloud,
He bounds to his feet and snuffs and
sniffs,
Shaking his wet sides over the cliffs,
And howls and hollos long and loud.
But on quiet days in May or June,
When even the grasses on the dune
Play no more their reedy tune,
With his head between his paws
He lies on the sandy shores,
So quiet, so quit he scarcely snores.

AGE 11

Huff by Wendy Cope

I am in a tremendous huff -
Really, really bad.
It isn't any ordinary huff -
It's one of the best I've had.

I plan to keep it up for a month
Or maybe for a year
And you needn't think you can make
me smile
Or talk to you. No fear.

I can do without you and her and them
-
Too late to make amends.
I'll think deep thoughts on my own for a
while,
Then find some better friends.

They'll be wise and kind and good
And bright enough to see

That they should behave with proper
respect
Towards somebody like me.

I do love being in a huff -
Cold fury is so heady.
I've been like this for half an hour
And I feel better already.

Perhaps I'll give them another chance,
Now I'm feeling stronger,
But they'd better watch out - my next
big huff
Could last much, much, much longer

AGE 11

Watch Your French by Kit Wright

When my mum tipped a pan full of red
hot fat,
over her foot, she had quite a little chat
And I won't tell you what she said
But it wasn't
"Fancy that!
I must try in the future to be more
careful
With this scalding red hot fat!"
When my dad fell over and landed -
splat
With a tray full of drinks (he tripped
over the cat)
But it wasn't:
"Fancy that!
I must try in the future to be more
careful
To step round our splendid cat!"
When Uncle Joe brought me a cowboy
hat
Back from the States, the dog stomped
it flat,
And I won't tell you what I said
But Mum and Dad yelled
"STOP THAT!"
Where did you learn that appalling
language?
Come on where ?"
"I've no idea," I said
"No Idea."

AGE12**Inniskeen Road****by Patrick Kavanagh**

The bicycles go by in twos and threes -
There's a dance in Billy Brennan's
barn tonight,
And there's the half-talk code of
mysteries
And the wink-and-elbow language of
delight.
Half-past eight and there is not a spot
Upon a mile of road, no shadow
thrown
That might turn out a man or woman,
not
A footfall tapping secrecies of stone.

I have what every poet hates in spite
Of all the solemn talk of contemplation.
Oh, Alexander Selkirk knew the plight
Of being king and government and
nation.
A road, a mile of kingdom. I am king
Of banks and stones and every
blooming thing.

AGE 12**Five Eyes By Walter de la Mare**

In Hans' old Mill his three black cats
Watch his bins for the thieving rats.
Whisker and claw, they crouch in the
night,
Their five eyes smouldering green and
bright:
Squeaks from the flour sacks, squeaks
from where
The cold wind stirs on the empty stair,
Squeaking and scampering,
everywhere.
Then down they pounce, now in, now
out,
At whisking tail, and sniffing snout;
While lean old Hans he snores away
Till peep of light at break of day;
Then up he climbs to his creaking mill,
Out comes his cats all grey with meal
— Jekkel, and Jessup, and one-eyed
Jill

AGE 12

Parents' Evening

By Allan Ahlberg

We're waiting in the corridor,
My dad, my mum and me.
They're sitting there and talking;
I'm nervous as can be.
I wonder what she'll tell 'em.
I'll say I've got a pain!
I wish I'd got my spellings right.
I wish I had a brain.

We're waiting in the corridor,
My husband, son and me.
My son just stands there smiling;
I'm smiling, nervously I wonder what
she'll tell us.
I hope it's not all bad.
He's such a good boy, really;
But dozy - like his dad.

We're waiting in the corridor,
My wife, my boy and me.
My wife's as cool as cucumber;
I'm nervous as can be.
I hate these parents' evenings.
I feel just like a kid again
Who's gonna get the stick.

I'm waiting in the classroom,
It's nearly time to start.
I wish there was a way to stop
The pounding in my heart.
The parents in the corridor
Are chatting cheerfully;
And now I've got to face them;
And I'm nervous as can be.

AGE 12

AMANDA!

By Robin Klein

Don't bite your nails, Amanda!
Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
Amanda!

(There is a languid, emerald sea,
where the sole inhabitant is me—
a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)

Did you finish your homework,
Amanda?
Did you tidy your room, Amanda?
I thought I told you to clean your shoes,
Amanda!

(I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare
feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is
sweet.)

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm
speaking to you,
Amanda!

(I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;
life in a tower is tranquil and rare;
I'll certainly never let down my bright
hair!)

Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at
you,
Amanda!

AGE 13;/14

When Yo Are Old
BY W.B. YEATS

When you are old and grey and full of
sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this
book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft
look
Your eyes had once, and of their
shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad
grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or
true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in
you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing
face;

And bending down beside the glowing
bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

Mid-Term Break
BY SEAMUS HEANEY

I sat all morning in the college sick bay
Counting bells knelling classes to a
close.
At two o'clock our neighbours drove me
home.

In the porch I met my father crying—
He had always taken funerals in his
stride—
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard
blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked
the pram
When I came in, and I was embarrassed
By old men standing up to shake my
hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my
trouble'.
Whispers informed strangers I was the
eldest,
Away at school, as my mother held my
hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless
sighs.
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged
by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room.
Snowdrops
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw
him
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left
temple,
He lay in the four-foot box as in his cot.
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked
him clear.

A four-foot box, a foot for every year.

Age 13/14

Nettles by Vernon Scannell

"Bed" seemed a curious name for those green spears.

That regiment of spite behind the shed:

It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears

The boy came seeking comfort and I saw

White blisters beaded on his tender skin.

We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.

At last he offered us a watery grin, And then I took my hook and honed the blade

And went outside and slashed in fury with it

Till not a nettle in that fierce parade Stood upright any more. Next task: I lit

A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead. But in two weeks the busy sun and rain

Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:

My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

AGE 13/14

Do not go gentle into that good night By Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.