

THE IRISH TIMES | irishtimes.com | May 14, 2025

Fighting Words

Young Irish and international writing



FIGHTING WORDS

The write to right.

Fighting Words 2025



Some of the young authors published in this supplement:
Back row (l-r): Finn Stafford (16) from Wexford, Charlie Cloake (16) from Wexford, Holly Keena (17) from Clare, Emily Abayawickrema (17) from Dublin, Emily Kinsella (18) from Dublin and Cuan Woods (17) from Dublin.
Front row (l-r): Clodagh Hoolan (18) from Offaly, Heather Nash (17) from Dublin, Rachel McCloskey (18) from Louth, Annie Donnelly (16) from Tipperary and Snizhana Rauth (18) from Laois.
Photograph: Tom Honan

Inside

- 3 **Introduction** by Djamel White
- 4 **The path** by Finn Stafford
- 5 **PearlIFY Me** by Rachel McCloskey
- 6 **Amor Ignis (Love of Fire)** by Sharon Ramazani
- Grief** by Molly Morris
- Structured melodies** by Kaila Patterson
- 7 **The whispering pines** by Aisha Sadiiq
- Happiness** by Adlyn Joseph Alex Noel

Fighting Words NI

- 8 **Ten years of student storytelling** by Glenn Patterson
- 9 **Skippity's toilet takeover** by year nine, Strangford Integrated College, Co Down
- Maggy and the burps of Boris** by P7, Scoil an Droichid, Belfast
- 10 **An essay by Eleri Hadaway, Fighting Words NI**
- 11 **Ted and Peely's great adventures** by Maine Integrated Primary School, Randalstown, Co Antrim
- Puman, the paper human** by P6 and P7, St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick, Co Down
- The back-flipping grannies** by P7, Currie Primary School, Belfast
- 12 **Hand in hand** by Nia Carter
- 13 **The silent witness** by Emily Kinsella

Fighting Words Gaelge & Gaeltacht

- 14 **1, 2, Spraoi!** Togra nua a cheanglaíonn an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach agus an mata
- 15 **Aoife agus Freddy** ó rang 2, 3 & 4, Scoil Mhichíl Naofa, Baile an Sceilg, Co Chiarraí
- Tíli an tíogar agus an phicil dhraíochta** ó rang 4B, Gaelscoil Shliabh Rua, Baile Átha Cliath
- James agus a bhean** ó rang 5, Gaelscoil Chill Dara, Co Chill Dara
- 16 **Mise agus mé féin** ó Éabha Mae Riggott
- 17 **Caisleáin Óir: Comóradh 100 Bliain**
- 18 **Blood Orange** by Holly Keena
- 19 **A wonderful life** by Heather Nash



- 20 **Make Your Own Stories**
- 22 **The thrill of the hunt** by Carrie Magee
- Ring on ring** by Clodagh Gallagher
- 23 **The cheesy mystery** by sixth class, Thomond Primary School, Thomond, Co Limerick
- 24 **The Frogalypse** by third-sixth class, Annalitten National School, Castleblayney, Co Monaghan

World Vision

- 25 **Why the bat flies at night** by Ayub Tor Dau, primary eight, Melut Girls Primary School, Upper Nile State, South Sudan

Fighting Words Limerick

- 26 **The world regains its colour** by students through National Learning Network Limerick
- 27 **The path we forge** by Mariia Avidieiva
- 28 **The Needle** by transgender and gender diverse young people, who participated in a workshop at a residential weekend with Transgender Equality Network Ireland
- Short** by Jodie Corbett
- 29 **The Cheese Apocalypse** by Italian and Irish students for a Léargas Erasmus + funded Story Seeds project
- 30 **Jeremy the giraffe and the case of the golden banana** by fifth class, Scoil Naomh Eoin, Killenard, Co Laois
- I am the River Seine** by Emily McDonnell
- 31 **Blue** by Emily Abayawickrema
- 32 **The art of hurling** by Charlie Cloake
- This is FI** by Jonathan Degani
- 33 **Revolut card** by Clodagh Hoolan
- Homeless in Dublin** by Abbie Martinn

Tales to Scale

- 34 **The Shapeshifter** an extract from a play by first-year students at Beaufort College, Navan
- 35 **Red Ruby** by Fiona Okoro

Outreach workshops

- 36 **The three bangs** by students at Leixlip Youth Reach
- 37 **St Patrick's Day** of terror by students at St Michael's House, Rathmines, Dublin
- 38 **The first step** by the WAS group at Barnardos, Ballyogan, Co Dublin



THE IRISH TIMES
24-28 Tara Street, Dublin 2

Editor: Conor Capplis
conor.capplis@irishtimes.com
Design: John Lane and Conor Capplis
Cover design: Cathal O'Gara
Photographs & illustrations: Fighting Words contributors & Getty Images
Programme co-ordinator: Mark Davidson
Editorial committee: Gerard Smyth, Joanne Hayden, Helen Seymour, Morgan O'Reilly, Laura Cassidy
Fighting Words is in: Dublin, Cork, Mayo, Galway, Wicklow, Donegal, Kerry, Wexford, Connemara, Louth, Monaghan, Longford, Clare, Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Kilkenny, Westmeath and Limerick
Fighting Words Northern Ireland is in: Belfast

‘A spark ignites the minute you come through the door’

Djamel White

From early school leaver to author, Djamel White’s life was changed forever at Fighting Words

I was 18, an early school leaver, interviewing with Fighting Words operations manager Sara Bennett at the organisation’s office on Behan Square, Dublin, when who should walk in through the front door but its co-founder Roddy Doyle?

It was February 2016. I had just come through an early school-leavers course in Ballyfermot, which focused on equipping us with the skills to enter the workforce. An internship placement was part of the programme so I contacted Fighting Words, which I had heard of through my wonderful, thoughtful instructors at Kylemore Community Training Centre. Although I still wanted to go to college, which I eventually did, it turned out to be a long road. There was a time, back in early 2015, when my friends and peers were preparing to sit their Leaving Cert exams, that I felt like I’d be lost forever.

So to be there, occupying a building with Roddy Doyle, entertaining the idea that I was going to be able to work there? It didn’t seem possible. I was thrilled but a little terrified when Sara offered me a six-month placement. Wayward, totally unsure of myself, I’d always wanted to write. I had never felt that I had much to offer in the way of anything else. There’s a



Photograph:
Conor Horgan

spark that exists in Fighting Words that ignites the minute you come through the front door. After more than 15 years in operation, that spark is stronger than ever. As a young person, volunteering in Fighting Words fostered in me a stronger sense of self, a stronger sense of community. As I met and worked alongside people of different ages, at different stages of life, I gained an understanding

that there was no such thing as a straight line through the middle. My path was no more unique than anybody else’s, but it was my story, and the stories were always what mattered most.

After my placement finished, I stayed on as a regular volunteer mentor for more than two years, before starting an undergraduate degree in English and creative writing at UCD. I graduated with

my BA in 2022 and my MFA in 2023, at 26. I had come a long way in eight years. My first novel is due to be published next January.

The work in this supplement is vibrant, vulnerable, at times playful and at others sombre, but always an undercurrent of hope runs through. It’s the type of thing that can only come from a place where the creative mind is celebrated, where the opportunity to come together with others is offered. It can be an isolating thing, wanting to write, when the digital world draws your attention to every corner of the globe, when every scandal and tragedy sleeps beside you on your bedside locker, waiting to greet you when the sun rises. It’s too easy to feel like what you want to make doesn’t matter, that there is nobody out there willing to receive it. That’s why it’s important to bring young creative minds together, to engage with them on equal ground and provide a space for them to access themselves unfettered by the restraints of their everyday lives.

My formative years, without question, were the years I spent in Fighting Words. The friends I made, the satisfaction of feeling useful, the confidence and trust given to me by the staff there I wouldn’t have received anywhere else were crucial to me as an early school leaver. I see that help being given to visiting students, interns, volunteers, every time I visit. It is a space where every single participant has something to gain. At the centre of it are the stories and the poems, but it is in the people where the magic lives. Each and every one of you. ●

A word from the Fighting Words Youth Advisory Panel

Welcome to this year’s Fighting Words magazine. We, the Youth Advisory Panel, want to start off this introduction seriously, but we don’t want it to be written like adults, since we are not actually adults. We are teenagers, all connected by the panel, though we are spread around the island.

Coming to Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI, you can have an automatic connection with people you have never met before because you bond over writing. We have all experienced how writing can bring people together. You can be inspired greatly by other writers, in ways you could

never think of, and the exact same can happen to writers that meet you. It is the connection between writers and their

brains – they tend to bounce off each other when they get together. For some of us, we would never have seen any of our writing

come about without this community, and we recommend anyone join to see their abilities skyrocket through the roof!

Whether seeing our plays performed by professional actors on stage in theatres or being published in print, like in this magazine, it is so important to highlight young writers and give them a place to use their creative voice. It is amazing when your writing has reached other people. It gives you confidence and makes you think about what careers you could have in the future (#MediaStudiesForTheWin).

Enjoy the range of writing, the impact of Fighting Words and the importance of creative expression! ●



Silver Life



A poem by **Cuan Woods, age 17, Dublin**

I walked a long line down the footpath,
Keeping my step just off the snow
creeping inwards towards the road.
The frost snaps and chill seeps, yet
there, in the snow, white,
silver-life lives.

In the rough, pale lumps,
Pure, clear crystals form.
They spread on the ground
And fall from the air;
snowflakes, frozen and whirling.
They split and mirror,
again and again,
floating down to those mounds of white.
White and plump like the pearls
that wash in from the ocean,
Rolling and growing,
and growing like the waves that carry them,
folding in on themselves
over and over
before crashing.
But the froth and foam that frame the shore
bear the weight of those waves
across the grain of silver sand.
The water bleaches the rocks
and fills the beach with colour,
all colour,
White.
Rainbow-white, like the opals
low and buried beneath
strata after strata
of earth, and stone, and fossil.
The ground itself is alive with silver life,
layers upon layers
of skeletons and shells
digging deep and down,
to start again the cycle.
Though there is no point to start from,
not anymore,
it never ends.
It shifts and sways like the
jellyfish, deeper and darker under.
They erupt from white polyps
to drift and float and flow,
and die and begin again
as grey, translucent blots.
They stain the sea as
the dust litters the land,
streaking the ground grey,
like the grey streaks the
white, marble stones.
Marble, metamorphic,
like the moth
that shreds its chrysalis and
sails the sky, searching,
looking for light.
lunar light,
rife with the image of life, reflected off a
pale, rocky surface.
The moon mirrors it down,
kneading the light into blobs of white
clouds, fluttering along the sky.
Clouds, that hurl those balls
of frozen rain towards the road,
falling on black tracks.

Footprints, in the snow.

The path



A story by **Finn Stafford, age 16, Co Wexford**

She was off the path. She knew almost immediately, even in the dying light of the evening, with the last rays of the sun's light barely penetrating the thick foliage above her head, it was obvious. She knew these woods like the back of her hand, had grown up here, had walked this path almost every day this summer.

That was why she was so puzzled when she saw that *thing*. She wasn't worried, not at first anyway. It looked like a big dog curled up in the middle of the path, at least until it turned its head. Its eyes, those were what really gave it away; they were red, not blood red or even like hot coals – they were suns, so hot and piercing that it was a surprise they could be contained. They were malignant and filled with what could only be described as a human level of intelligence. That was when the worry set in. She panicked and she ran and she had been running ever since. She could feel it behind her, chasing her through unfamiliar trees in fading light.

She could hear it too. It was crashing through the underbrush faster than she could hope to stay ahead of, shrieking and howling like an owl or maybe a wolf and panting in time with her own breathing.

She thought that maybe if she just kept running it might lose interest and leave her alone. She was sprinting over roots and ferns, rocks and boulders, and that *thing* that was chasing her was keeping up just fine. She was on the verge of collapse when suddenly the trees gave way. She was running in open space over gravel and loose leaf litter.

She hit a rock.

She tripped.

She fell.

And she didn't stop falling.

The police found the body the next morning, just as the sun began to reach its apex. It was lying face down in a creek at the bottom of a steep-sided gully. It was almost a peaceful scene, small rocks interspersed with bigger boulders, water running over them, babbling all the way down the creek while birds chirped on branches brought low by some long-gone storm, the tranquillity of the scene broken only by the body, broken and battered, and by a set of tracks running back up the face of the cliff.

The death was ruled an accident by the coroner, just another stupid kid who wandered off the trail and into the black inkiness of the night, never to be seen again by human eyes.





Pearlify Me



A poem by **Rachel McCloskey, age 18, Co Louth**

I am worth my weight in pearls.
Didn't you know this?
Watch how they push up from my skin -
Boils and bruises turned to brilliance
I am a page of Braille-written grievances

The pressure is my becoming.
What am I without it?
Pearlify me
Until I am a beast of sand and cracked ceramic
My only value is in the tension
Bring it on
Drown me in it
And I'll fill my lungs with your bullshit
Let it be my worth
Until I clink and chip when I walk

Heuston Station



A poem by **Annie Donnelly, age 16, Co Tipperary**

Maura struggles with the suitcases,
The kids argue over a fiver from Nan,
Neil of security, shares his glares,
And so does a young business man,

A girl mutters in Russian to her phone,
While Liam nicks her wallet from the ground,
A newly wed couple don't take notice,
Honeymoon bound.

The clan of Wexford boys,
Off a night out, long for bed,
Lucy's stepped out for a fag,
A mum learns her sister is dead.

Rodger curses at the clock,
Shaky teen has spilt his drink,
Homeless woman wretches coughs,
Jack takes another pill to think.

An elder has bought a new book,
Sam can barely count enough change,
Little girl cries under her breath,
Mary's party, taking ages to arrange,

Alex's found out about the cancer,
Rose's been fired today,
The buses are too confusing for a boy,
The young girls have been led astray.

The Supermac's worker has burnt her hand,
And Michael's lost his phone,
Young Tommy gives his mother cheek,
A man has left the hospital, alone.

And with the world spinning around,
The pigeons still claim the ground.
And the board shows many a delay,
All the piano longs for is play.
And the busy Luases come and go,
The worn out commuters come in tow.
And the coffee line never stops,
The dirty floor needs some mops.
And every day complaints are loud,
The recorded voice guides the crowd.
And every time the whistle is blown,
Everyone leaves for lives of their own.

Amor Ignis (Love of Fire)



A story by **Sharon Ramazani, age 15, Dublin**

"A child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

A Witch!"
"Burn her!"
The sounds of the once friendly villagers ring in my ears. My family. They showered me in hot stones and took daggers to my hair, painting my face and limbs in colours unimaginable. I never

knew how long I could run for until that day. It's been weeks. I've started to lose count and eventually, all feeling in my arms. I dragged my feet across the snowy ground, leaving trails of red splotches in my wake. Every move I make feels like walking on scalding coal, my eyelashes coated in icicles and the tips of my fingers turning into a rich purple.

I try to close my eyes for just a moment, the sting of cracking fires jolts me awake. What have I done to deserve this? It feels like only yesterday I was playing in the streets of my warm village, stuffing my face with pastries from the bakery next door, sitting around the fireplace with my mother as she sang me to sleep. I always thought of her as some sort of siren, the creatures that lure sailors into the sea with their voices. But even then, she was more ethereal, even if only to me. Suddenly, memories come flooding as I stumble on to the ground, No longer do I feel the cold of the snowy carpet below me.

"Grab her!"



"She's not to be trusted!"

Shaking my head as tears run down my face, the temperature makes my throat hoarse and I can barely make a sound. All I can hear is the sound of my mother's screaming as fire burns around her. The world goes quiet, my vision is pitch black.

The sound of shoes tapping against a wooden floor plays around me, people talking in a language I can't understand. I hear as the footsteps get closer to me and scurry off like mice. There's a mature sounding voice that reprimands the mice, which I believe were children. My arms won't move and my neck is stiff like a door. I squint my eyes open struggling with how heavy they are. "Requiescat puella, vultu ipsius longissima huc iter habuit."

A chorus of "awh's" erupts from the children sat by a rocking chair with an old lady in it. She shushes them, getting a song of little giggles in return. Maybe she brought me here? Surely not. I was miles away from any neighbouring village. Not that I knew of anyway. I've been seeing the same plain of snow for an eternity. When did I actually pass out?

"Lorem, nunc habitant licet. Im certo amaret in occursum omnium vestrum semel shes plene evigilat."

The children darted to look at me, shutting my eyes in a panic. Did they notice? How will they understand me if I speak, or how will I understand them?

Grief



A poem by **Molly Morris Dywer, age 13, Co Wexford**

As we grow up with pets,
We forget
That they can't be with us forever

Because someday
With or without knowing, we will touch
their fur for the last time
Kiss them
Hug them
All for the last time.

We will hear their last meow,
Or bark
Or their last pleading look,

The day we got them,
Turns into their last day

Although they may get on your nerves
They might annoy you
Or even make you mad

But you must know, it's their first time living
And all they want to do is love you
Until they can't anymore.

Structured melodies



A poem by **Kaila Patterson, age 16, Belfast**

The tip of my pen scatters stories,
a tale or two gracing the page,
taking feeling from my fingertips,
words dance on a blank stage,
my joy is found in crafting worlds,
then unveiling my own in a bright light,
with only ink I can choose a whisper,
or dystopian crashes of meteorite,
my glee resides in a paragraph,
for I find melodies in lines of prose,
tugging a heart closer to the realm,
of scribbled minds and long agoes,
my delight lives in a dozen verses,
where love is a mystery I hold dear,
a vibrant portrait on an old canvas,
sonnets are symphonies to my ear,
my elation exists in creating a character,
I am a fierce puppeteer yet sometimes fair,
letting people wander around my brain,
I hope they like steering the wheel in there,
my happiness remains in storytelling,
in lands of beauty and rainbow hue,
when my works do reach a reader,
may these structured melodies bring happiness too.

The whispering pines



A story by **Aisha Sadiiq Ali, age 19, Dublin**

Alia had always found solace in the woods near her home, a sprawling forest of towering pines and soft, mossy undergrowth. One crisp autumn afternoon, she ventured deeper than usual, enchanted by the rustling leaves and the distant call of a woodpecker. The sun filtered through the branches, casting playful shadows on the ground. As she wandered, the familiar trails began to fade, replaced by a labyrinth of trees that seemed to close in around her. She paused, looking around, but the landscape felt foreign. The vibrant colours of fall had turned into a muted palette of browns and greys. Panic bubbled up in her chest.

“Stay calm,” she whispered to herself. “Just retrace your steps.” But every

direction looked the same, and the path she thought she’d taken had vanished. The forest was alive with sounds: the whispering wind, the crunch of twigs, the distant rustle of creatures. But they only heightened her sense of isolation.

As twilight descended, the forest transformed. Shadows stretched, and the trees looked like ancient sentinels. Alia’s heart raced. She took a deep breath, recalling the stories her grandmother told her about the forest spirits that protected those who respected nature. She decided to sit and gather her thoughts, hoping for clarity. Closing her eyes, she listened.

The whispers of the wind became clearer, almost like a gentle guidance. She opened her eyes and felt an urge to follow the soft sound, like a melody in the air. With cautious steps, she moved toward it, trusting her instincts. Minutes felt like hours as she navigated through the dense underbrush, but the whispers grew louder, more inviting. Suddenly, the trees parted, revealing a small clearing bathed in the last light of day. In the centre stood an ancient oak, its gnarled branches reaching toward the sky. Alia approached the tree, feeling a sense of peace wash over her. She placed her hand on its rough bark, and in that moment,



she realised she wasn’t alone.

A small creature, a fox with bright, knowing eyes, emerged from the shadows. It tilted its head, as if inviting her to follow. Without hesitation, she trailed behind the fox as it led her through the forest. The path became clearer, illuminated by the glow of fireflies dancing in the dusk.

Alia felt a mix of gratitude and wonder as she followed her guide, trusting the forest had its own way of guiding her home. Finally, they reached the edge of

the woods, and the familiar sight of her neighbourhood came into view. The fox stopped, turning to offer one last glance before disappearing back into the shadows. Alia stood for a moment, heart full of awe and relief.

As she made her way home, she knew she would return to the forest, not just for the peace it offered but for the magic that lay within its depths. Lost and found, she had discovered a deeper connection to the world around her, one that whispered secrets only the trees could tell.

Happiness



A poem by **Adlyn Joseph Alex Noel, age 15, Co Down**

As I watch the sky, the world falls quiet and for a few moments I feel happy.
Okay maybe not silent, the birds are chirping their lullabies but that makes me calm and happy as well.
As I look to my left, I see my best friend. She glistens in the daylight, swaying her head to the song of the outdoors. She brings me happiness.
The grass is chilly against my skin. It’s a bit wet, sure, but who doesn’t like getting a bit watery? All this brings me great happiness.
I’ve got my sunglasses on, whistling a basic tune. The sun blinding, my friend’s sighing and me, happy.
As I lay back, I know that happiness is all around me. People, places and most importantly, nature. Life. Life, brings me happiness.
Tip. Tap. Tip. Tap. Tip. Tap. Tip. Tap. The rain poured like my tears. I was bawling my eyes out. Why was I not happy?
“It’s raining cats and dogs.” If only it was. If only I could just go outside as a cat or a dog fell right into my cold arms, I’d at least feel the slightest bit happy.
I didn’t know why I wasn’t happy; I would have been happy a few months before, a few days ago even. What changed then? Where was my happiness?
As I watch the sky turn from cloudy and gloomy to hot and sunny, I feel my tears drying, slowly disappearing. Am I happy?
I sniffle, breathing in the hot sun. Maybe I was. Maybe I was feeling better. Although I was crying a minute ago, I feel safe. I feel a sense of happiness blooming in me.
I run to my best friend, yes her. She comforts me in ways I didn’t know I could be comforted. I hug her tightly, feeling a warm fuzzy feeling inside me.
Everything makes me calm. Everything makes me joyous. Everything makes me happy.



Glenn Patterson set up Fighting Words NI, which has reached 25,000 participants over the last decade

Ten years of student storytelling: ‘Not for a minute have they ceased to amaze’

Glenn Patterson

Glenn Patterson is founding patron of Fighting Words NI and director of the Seamus Heaney Centre, Queen’s University Belfast

As I recall it, I was just calling in for a cup of coffee. It was spring 2013 and Seán Love had texted me out of the blue. He was in Belfast – in East Belfast – a hop and a skip from me, in fact, with a couple of people I knew, in the Skainos Centre on the Lower Newtownards Road. I knew Seán through his work at Amnesty International and latterly at Fighting Words, which he and Roddy Doyle had set up in Dublin a few years before. I kept saying I was going down to do a workshop. Kept saying and never doing. So, I hopped it and skipped it to Skainos to say hello ... and walked out the door again an hour later having agreed to help set up a Fighting Words centre in Belfast. I don’t know that I have spent many better hours in my life.

It took a while to get everything in place,

because – how do I say it? – things work a little differently here in the North. This is in no small part thanks to Young at Art/the Belfast Children’s Festival, whose then director, Ali FitzGibbon, became chair of the board; the 174 Trust at the Duncairn Centre in North Belfast; and flagship grants from the Ireland Funds and Ulster Garden Villages. Fighting Words Belfast was offering its first writing workshops to school-age children in 2015.

The windows of our second-floor home in Skainos took in gable-ends with loyalist paramilitary murals, the famous Harland and Wolff shipyard cranes, the brand-new Titanic Film Studio beyond, and the profile, in the further distance, of Cave Hill. Belfast’s pasts and possible futures viewed from the room where, on any given day, 20 or 30 stories took shape. The opening chapter always agreed collectively, everything that came after bearing the stamp of those 20 or 30 individual imaginations. Not for a minute in the 10 years since have they ceased to amaze.

In those 10 years Fighting Words Belfast has become Fighting Words Northern Ireland. Under the directorship of Hilary Copeland we have reached 25,000 participants, working with schools and community groups from Poyntzpass to Derry-Londonderry, and from Carrickfergus to

Enniskillen. We have published thousands of stories and many beautiful anthologies, and audiences at the Lyric in Belfast, the Abbey in Dublin and venues across NI, have listened, wide-eyed, to the plays, poems, rap songs and stories that our young writers have performed and read at live showcases.

The challenges have been enormous and still are. (If 2024 was a particularly good year for you, don’t be shy to offer a bit of support.) From the outset, there has been a close relationship between Fighting Words NI and the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen’s University Belfast. Fighting Words staff run regular training sessions for Creative Writing MA students who are interested in volunteering with them. The relationship has deepened in the past year, with the appointment of Stephen Connolly as the Seamus Heaney Centre’s first outreach and engagement officer and the opening of a new Heaney Centre building, with a room large enough to host Fighting Words workshops. It

didn’t hurt that Stephen turned out to be a close friend of Mr Duck, the Fighting Words grumpy editor. (Though his quack is worse than his bite. Mr Duck’s, that is.)

It was a source of real pride to all involved in the Heaney Centre that the first writing produced in the new building, last June, was by a Primary 5 class from Botanic Primary School, a short walk from Queen’s University, in the heart of the Holylands, among the most diverse neighbourhoods in the city.

In fact one of the greatest endorsements I have ever heard, or read, of Fighting Words NI came from another workshop in the Heaney Centre in the opening weeks of this year. Asked how the workshop had made them feel, one young writer said simply, and with only a slight variation in spelling, “bombarded with joy”.

You would get that on a T-shirt.

You would – for all that the challenges remain (again, feel free to help) – take that with you into your next 10 years.

Fighting Words NI is very grateful for the support of its two principal funders, the Government of Ireland through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Fund, and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through the National Lottery



Primary Stories

Skippity's toilet takeover

An extract from a story by **year nine, Strangford Integrated College, Co Down**

Skippity was singing his most famous opera song on the stage in the Ohio Opera House. As he was singing, a beer bottle was thrown by a drunk member of the audience. It hit Skippity's flush lever and it made him furious! He overreacted as usual and steam came out of his ears.

"That hurt! Skippity should not be treated like this," he said to himself in his deepest basso voice. "I was in the middle of performing and I got flushed down the s-bend! I'm going to take over the world with no mercy. They'll see what a really cruel person I am."

The curtain came down and the stressed stage crew lifted him off the stage into his dressingroom. His best friend, shiny Bethany, was waiting for him. Her marble glistened. "You can't keep doing this Skippity, you're going to get banned from performing!" Bethany exclaimed.

Bethany rolled off frustratedly on her marble wheels to find out who had thrown the beer bottle. She discovered it was Marco, an Italian plumber, who hated Skippity...



Maggy and the burps of Boris

An extract from a story by **P7, Scoil an Droichid, Belfast**, at a residency workshop at the Seamus Heaney Centre, Queen's University Belfast

Maggy the magma alien woke up and started the day by eating a five-metre-high stack of maglorp waffles, his favourite food. Maglorp waffles are wrapped around a stick of magma butter and are covered in granite sprinkles. You slurp them up to eat them.

Suddenly, Boris the troll brutally smashed through the window and came into the kitchen. He said in a deep angry voice, "Give me waffles!"

He took Maggy's waffles and ran away. Maggy was flabbergasted and chased Boris, who ran whilst eating the waffles, going, "Om nom nom," slurping, gulping and burping constantly. Maggy was devastated by the complete foul play that Boris had committed against his poor soul.

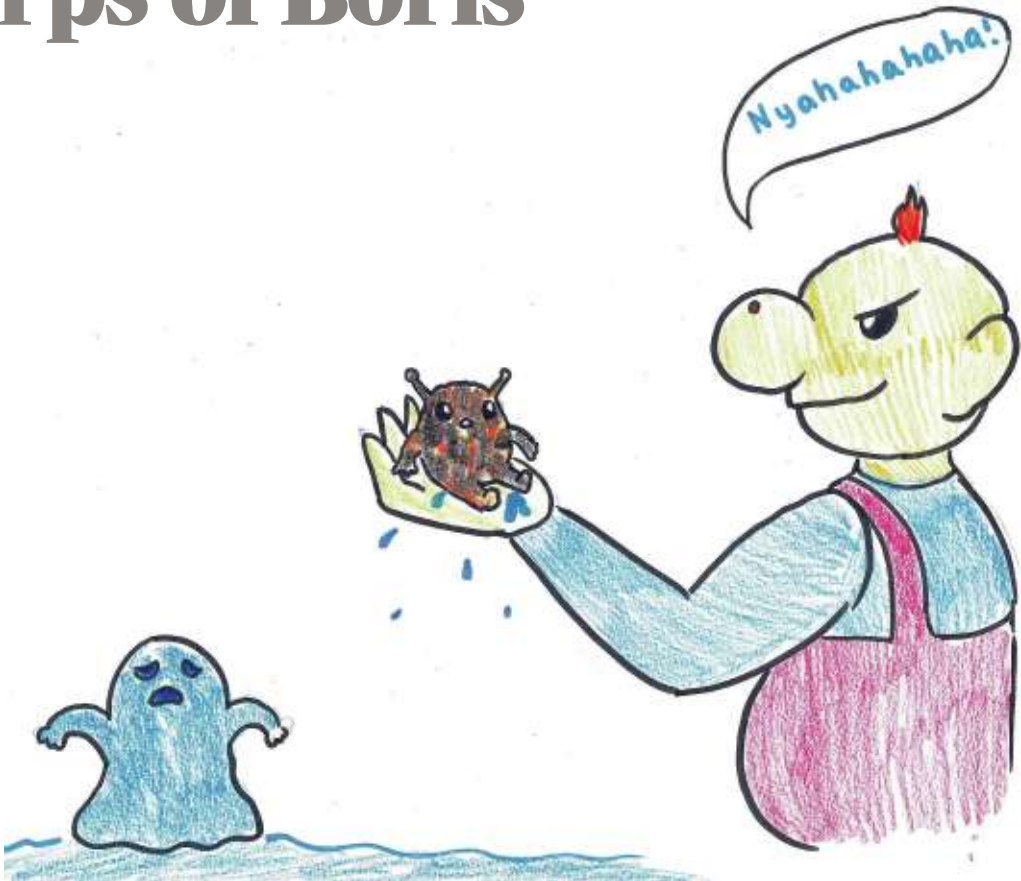
Maggy called a meeting everyone that lived on the planet to plan how to get rid of Boris.

The ruler squeaked in a high-pitched voice, "Stop this nonsense immediately! Absolute poppycock, there are no trolls on this planet!"

Because the ruler didn't believe him, no one else did. Maggy stormed out of the meeting furious and got ready for battle.

He got an idea to team up with his friend Splashy. They ran across the water, Maggy fell in and started to evaporate.

"AAAAA!!!!!" screamed Maggy. At that moment, Boris arrived...



‘Once freed from the rigid rules of the classroom, students are lit by a fire’

Eleri Hadaway

Eleri Hadaway, Lumos travel Award recipient, writes about her experience working with Fighting Words Northern Ireland

I’m a workshop facilitator at Fighting Words NI. Last spring, following my graduation from Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, I received the Lumos Travel Award. This award provides funding for Belmont alumni to explore ideas which impassion them through self-designed, international work projects. Throughout the course of my English degree, I studied storytelling’s potential to support individual empowerment and social change movements. I chose to do my Lumos project with Fighting Words NI because stories are at the heart of the organisation – everything here revolves around a steadfast belief in their power.

My very first workshop, last September, was on Zoom, and I remember feeling intimidated by even the simplest of roles. I was nervous that I wouldn’t be able to understand the children’s accents, or that I would freeze and forget what I was supposed to do. My workshop leaders accommodated my nerves graciously and gently encouraged me to take on more. By December, I was leading workshops, transformed from tentative typist to confident story-maker. Each workshop has been unique and completely invigorating.

I can’t begin to recount all that I have learned through workshop facilitation. Fighting Words NI is a place where humility, precision, humour, quick thinking, compassion, intentionality, reflection and silliness come into practice every day. Each aspect of our workshops has been carefully crafted to best serve the child and the spirit of creativity. We employ playful props and characters to generate a sense of magic, refer to the young people as authors to convey our confidence in them, de-emphasise grammar and spelling to release them from perfectionistic inhibitions, use our first names to subvert typical classroom expectations, affirm everyone’s suggestions to eliminate the fear of failure, and debrief after every session to evaluate how we could improve the next workshop.



Although these practices have been intentionally constructed, nothing is taken for granted or set in stone. Our commitment to constant reflection and evaluation keeps us out of pedagogical ruts which serve tradition more than the young people.

By inviting young people into a space where they can be themselves, exercise creativity earnestly and without judgment, and receive guidance and affirmation from adults, we open them to a world they

sharing. They are empowered by the knowledge that this skill has always resided within them. The concept of creative writing shifts from a burden to a passion. It is so fulfilling to watch this happen right in front of me – some students start out their individual writing time feeling dejected about having no ideas, but after a few questions from a Fighting Words mentor, inspiration strikes. Sparks light in their eyes and they’re off to the races, ideas spilling from their mouths faster than their pencils can move. The magic starts in our workshops, but it follows the children back to their classrooms – many continue writing the stories they started with us and retain their newfound enthusiasm for thinking imaginatively.



By inviting young people into a space where they can be themselves, we open them to a world they may never have previously imagined

After the children leave each workshop, there is a palpable buzz in the room. We all feel the glow of being in a space where creative freedom reigns. The process is transformative, and I have found my own perspective shifted by my interactions with young creatives. I admire their generous emotions, their delight for all things outrageous and their earnest desire to share brilliant ideas. It requires an incredible amount of vulnerability to pour your heart into creating something and then share it with others, but these young writers do it every day in Fighting Words spaces.

Storytelling can change lives. It creates empathy, sparks discussions, connects strangers and represents diverse experiences. We need stories on a personal, local, and global scale. I can’t wait to see all our young people, empowered in their ability to create, authoring goodness in the world.

Eleri Hadaway: ‘Storytelling creates empathy and sparks discussions.’

may never have previously imagined. Time and time again, teachers and students alike are shocked by how much the young people enjoy and excel at writing stories. Once freed from the rigid rules and expectations of the traditional classroom setting, students are lit on fire by an enthusiasm for storytelling, writing, and

Primary Stories

Ted and Peely's great adventures

An extract from a story by **P4, Maine Integrated Primary School, Randalstown, Co Antrim**

One day after school, Peely was feeling excited on their way to the new park, because it had just opened. Peely met the two popular and horrid bullies from school. They were way bigger than Peely and they were unkind. There was a little dog there called Ted. Ted and Peely were from the same class at school. Ted noticed the unkindness.

"Get away from him," Ted growled, took off his collar, and chased them out of the park. Peely was shocked and in a frightened way he said, "Thank you. Would you like to come to my house to play?"

They were calmly walking when Peely tripped over a curb and hurt his knee. "I think I need a rest," thought Peely to himself. When Ted was helping Peely up, they stumbled across some footprints. The footprints looked like ginormous, purple paws.

"This looks like one of my old friends," said Peely...



Puman, the paper human

An extract from a story by **P6 and P7, St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick, Co Down**

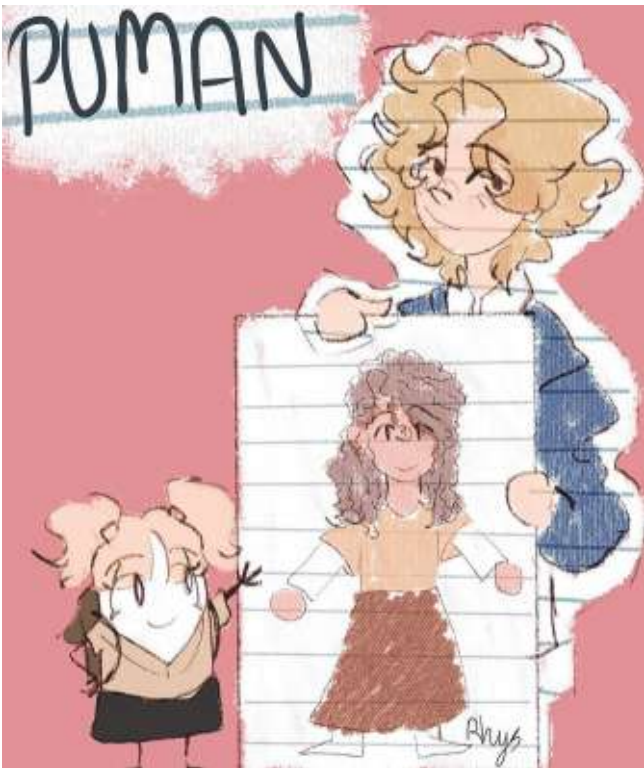
Welcome to our story. This is the story of Puman. He liked sign language and was made of paper.

Puman has been scarred. One day a wee child didn't realise that Puman was a paper human and accidentally cut off his arm.

Puman had origami powers and when his arm was cut off, he transformed into an owl and tried to fly away – but he just couldn't.

Rebecca the rubber saw that Puman was in trouble and decided to help. Rebecca had a backpack of resources. And inside it there was fortunately glue, a stapler and paper.

Rebecca said, "Rebecca to the rescue!!!!"



The back-flipping grannies

An extract from a story by **P7, Currie Primary School, Belfast**

Granny Anna was a great back-flipper and her best friend was Granny Susan. They met in the Quadruple Back-Flipping contest.

Training wasn't going well for Anna. "I should've had my Weetabix today. Now I can't do quadruple backflips any more!" she disappointedly cried out.

She drank 20 bottles of children's blood and did 100 backflips in a row! Twenty bottles was too much and she felt sick. Susan and her friend were trying different diets to see what would work for them.

Years ago, Granny Anna's pet watermelon had disappeared and she found out that her neighbours' children had eaten it. Ever since, she had been terrified of children.

Granny Anna went to the skate park where she practised every minute of every day. She was the second best back-flipper and front-flipper. Some children came over to the fence.

Granny Anna felt terrified. Susan



noticed and took the children over to another part of the park so Granny Anna could practise.

One of the children ran over to her and said, "Would you like to play with us?" Granny Anna was lost for words. She was stuttering and didn't know what decision to make. Then suddenly, she saw someone with a pet watermelon and it made her remember her past...

The unforgiving Beira



A story by **Misha Caymo**,
age 15, Dublin

Robbie's routine was as tiring as it gets on the Beira oil platform. Grab whatever breakfast leftovers in the cafeteria, enter out to the deck, and work wherever he was needed, fixing the electrics. Some days would be more forgiving, only needing to fix one or two fuses, other days were cruel and would drag him along the rig from dawn until dusk. Today happened to be one of those cruel days, with extra pouring rain! He wished he could cry.

Speaking of ... Robbie could hear just that, but it wasn't from himself. It was coming from the accommodations area. Robbie goes to investigate. It's coming from under the pool table

"Hello?"

"..."

"If you stay there, Rennick will eventually find you! So – better to come out now!"

A scrawny woman crawls out and stands up. She's pale, her cheeks sunken in.

"You're ... not from our crew are you?"



What are you doing here? Are you a stowa–"

"I-I'm sorry! Yes – I-I snuck on to the rig and don't work here but I swear it's for a good reason! I swear – just – please don't report me."

"Nonono – I can't help ya. My job means more to me than a criminal. I don't put my job on the line like a piece of fish bait."

The girl kneels in front of him, pleading with tears. "Please ... I can't go back to the mainland right now – I have nothing left

there ... please "

"Geez ... I ... urgh – fine. Fine, I'll help your sorry soul – but I'm won't give you the world or anything." And so it was. For the next few weeks, Robbie would start getting up earlier so he and the stowa- ... girl could split food evenly between them.

He asked one day: "So ... what's yer name?"

"Carrie ..."

"Right ... Robbie."

And another day he asked: "For someone so bony, ya sure do scoff down those

eggs and bacon, eh?"

"Mhm ..."

"Not much of a talker, are ya?"

"..."

And one day, he said: "You know, you remind me a bit of my daughter.

"Oh? What's her name?"

"Olivia ... she's a little angel."

"Ah ... that's sweet."

But a week before Robbie's work finished ...

"I got brekky! Eggs and ba–"

The tray drops from his hands, the plates shattering into bits.

"Carrie?"

But she was nowhere in his room.

He sprints out, looking everywhere. Accommodations, the kitchen, but nothing.

"Robbie!" A voice called from outside. Two of his coworkers stood outside, holding Carrie by her arms.

"Care to explain who your friend is?"

"Let 'er go! She's done no harm!"

"Really? Caus' I heard from the police that this lil' lass is supposed to be on death row for murderin' her ma! Is that no harm, Robbie?"

"You what?"

"Rob, I can expla–"

"Look – you're a good pal to me Robbie, so I'll give you a choice. Either you get rid of her, or you deal with her and the police when we get back on land."

"I ..."

"My job means more to me than a criminal."

Hand in hand



A story by **Nia Carter**,
age 15, Dublin

I sit upon the hefty, old, red lawnmower feeling like the little queen of the house on her throne. He stands beside me, smoke in one wrinkled hand, me in the other, keeping me up. I look at the garage around me, the

dilapidated radio on the highest shelf, the boxes-on-boxes of decorations at the back, his and her wellies lined up at the door, neighbouring the shelf of tools.

We sit in a comfortable kind of silence, each taking in a different picture. I faintly hear the sounds of Catchphrase and my family's wrong answers following the clue. That doesn't matter now though. All I care about right now is that I'm here with him. His cigarette slowly diminishes until at last, it goes out. He stubs it out in the chipped red ashtray and takes my small hand in his, like a pea in its pod, where it belongs. He helps me hop off and we walk back to the livingroom, hand in hand. We get back and he gives Dad a subtle thumbs up, as he always does, and he finds my brother in the brown armchair with the chipped leather in the arms. He squishes in next to him and sits contentedly watching the ads.

I sit as he pushes me on his blue, rickety walker, down the bright, sterile hallway, doors closed as their inhabitants take rest. I take notice of the feeble, grey chairs outside each room, and I begin to feel



sorrowful for those that are empty. We're laughing as Granny looks at us worried. Secretly, I'm concerned too. He doesn't look like he used to, he's pale, and he has a machine that he brings around with him.

Mam says that he has something called "cancer". I don't know what that is, but I can tell it isn't a good thing, otherwise he wouldn't be in a hospice. I give him a weak smile and he puts his hand on mine, and I am instantly put to ease. It's all going to be

okay as long as it stays like this, hand in hand, the way it's supposed to be.

We sit in the pews. Second row from the front. Dad gives a speech about how everyone adored his dad and what a loving soul he was. People start to sob. I see Granny cry; I've never seen her cry before. The priest speaks about what an excellent grandfather he was to his eight beautiful grandchildren. I begin to weep as I realise there is no more sitting in the garage, or going on the swings, or pelting him with snowballs.

I'm surrounded by aunties and uncles I don't know. They all seem to know me though. I feel out of place, like a needle lost in a haystack. I hold Mam's hand, trying to regain that feeling, as I remember how his hand felt in mine. We start to saunter to the grave. I know that this is the last time I will see him again. I shed small tears that feel too big for my little eyes. Mam asks if I want to say goodbye one last time. I shake my head. I can't do it. I long for one more moment where nothing else matters. That it is just me and him, hand in hand.

The silent witness



A poem by
Emily Kinsella,
age 18, Dublin

I was the breath that never came,
the cry that never filled the room.
I was the light that flickered,
then faded before the dawn.

Yet here I linger,
a whisper in the walls,
a shadow in the corner of your eye,
watching as you grow,
baby sister and brother,
two lights that shine where mine could not.

I see your first steps,
the stumble and the rise,
the way you reach for the world
with hands I never had the chance to hold.
Your laughter fills the spaces
where my silence lingers,
each giggle a note of a song
I never sang.

You wear the love I never physically felt,
the warmth of a mother's embrace,
the pride in a father's eyes.
And I am here, just out of sight,
the sibling you never knew,
a memory before there was memory.

But I am not sorrow,
not a tear in the tapestry of your lives.
I am the quiet witness,
the guardian of your days.
I watch you grow,
rooted in a love that never withers,
in the hearts of those who remember
what could have been,
but find joy in what it is.

You carry me in ways you'll never know,
in the way you hold each other close,
in the sibling bond that ties you tight.
I am the thread in the weave,
invisible but strong,
binding you to me,
and me to you.

And though we never met,
and I never grew,
I am with you in every step you take,
in every breath you draw.
I am the unseen,
the silent,
the ever-present
the big brother who loves you still.

Primary Stories

Hombonkulous Michael and the revenge of the fallen

An extract from a story by **sixth class, St Paul's Primary School, North Brunswick Street, Dublin**

Once upon a time, Hombonkulous Micheal gets himself a hot chocolate. Then Bob the 3rd comes out and knocks over the hot chocolate.

But then Bobby the 2nd helps Hombonkulous to get himself a larger hot chocolate, and then they become best friends.

Suddenly, with his magic powers, Bob the 3rd turns on him and ships him to Eswatini.

After, Bob the 3rd shows Hombonkulous a mirror, and Hombonkulous gets scared of his own reflection. Hombonkulous starts punching the mirror repeatedly until his reflection is gone.

They then get a taxi to South Africa and catch a plane to Albania where they meet Saint Peter Oldsworth.

He is a mighty king and a great philosopher. He found a royal sceptre from a falling star, and it gives him great powers.

He decides to give it to Hombonkulous because he has grown too old, and he thinks Hombonkulous would be worthy of the staff.

Hombonkulous uses the staff's power to teleport back to the coffee shop. But when he gets back, the coffee shop is no longer modern day: it is a medieval coffee shop.

Bob the 3rd says with a posh accent, "Well well well, lookie who we have here, I shall enjoy beating you Hombonkulous Michael."

Then Bobby the 2nd returns from Albania to Estonia and then he teams up with Hombonkulous Michael to beat Bob the 3rd...



The book, Bartholemew and the ghost busters

An extract from a story by **fourth class, St Mary's and St Gerard's NS, Enniskerry, Co Wicklow**

The book was eating a lot of people, every time he ate a person a page was added. So far, the maths book had 27 pages. The teacher was getting angry because her class was getting smaller and smaller. The teacher was looking for the book to destroy it. She didn't dare tell her class because they would leave. The parents were getting angry and complaining "where are our children gone".

The teacher hired a ghost-busting team that included a monocreatan unicorn, a block of cheese, and a chihuahua called Bob.

A new student arrived who was a maths genius, fewer students started disappearing



because he was doing the maths for them.

But then, the book's friend, the magic ape called Bartholemew, disguised the book as another book...

1,2,Spraoi!

Togra nua a cheanglaíonn an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach agus an mata

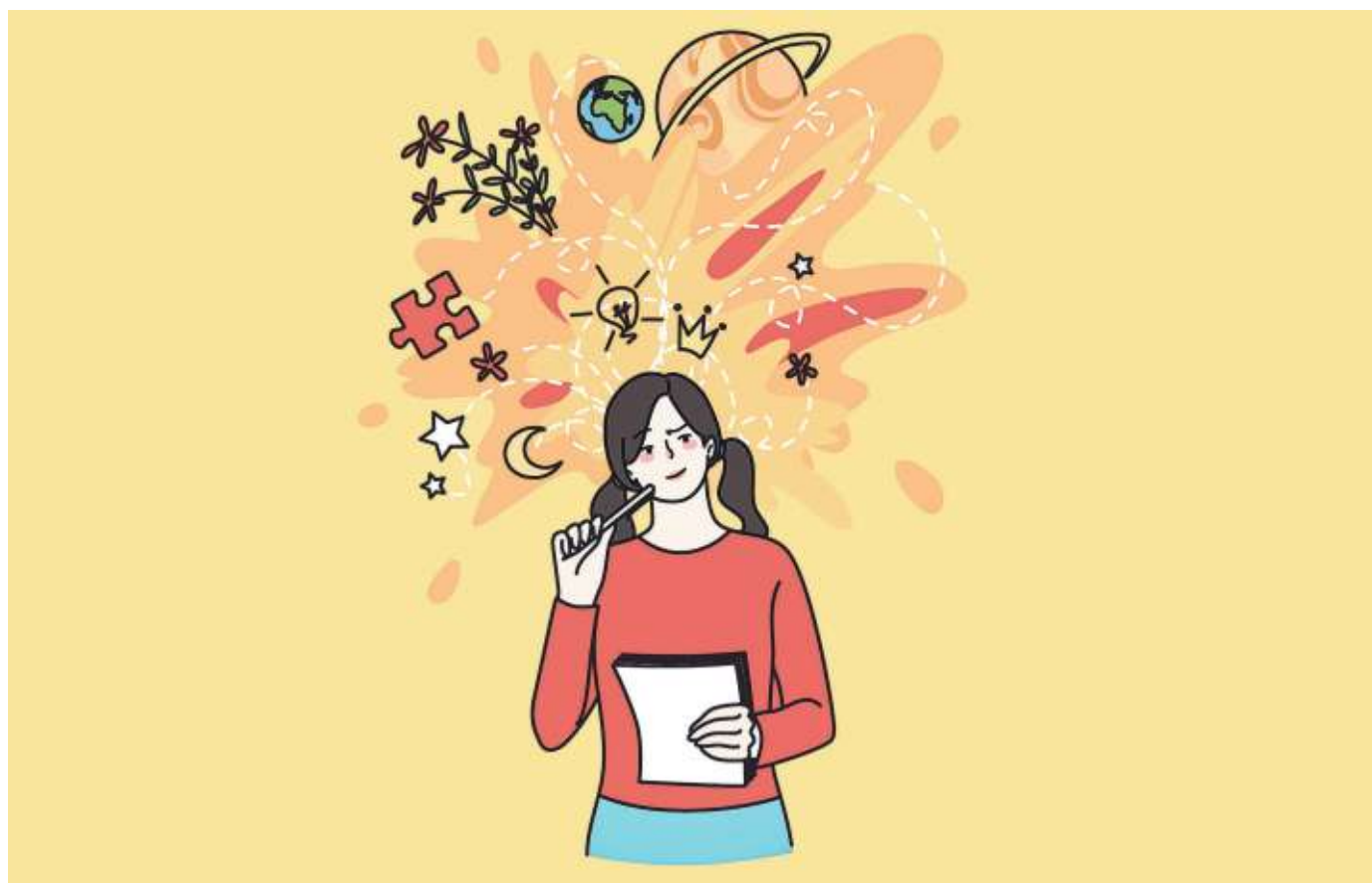
An Chailleach Mhata agus Domhan Draíochta na gCruthanna

Seo tús an scéil a scríobh páistí as **rang a ceathair-sé, Scoil Bhreandáin, Eachléim, An Fód Dubh, Co Mhaigh Eo** mar chuid den togra 1, 2, Spraoi!

Lá amháin bhí cailleach ann i nDomhan Draíochta na gCruthanna agus bhí fuath aici don mhata. Caoimhe an t-ainm a bhí uirthi. Bhí craiceann ghlas aici. Nuair a bhí sí óg, bhí sí go dona ag an mata agus bhí uirthi fanacht ar an bplainéad uafásach seo. Bhí boladh uafásach i ngach áit ach, bhí cuid amháin den phlainéad a bhí go deas. Ní raibh a fhios ag aon duine go raibh an leath deas eile ann agus sin an fáth go raibh gach duine ag iarraidh an áit a fhágáil.

Bhí sí ina cónaí i gcaisleán ina haonar agus bhí uaigneas uirthi. Bhí a caisleán déanta as cruthanna 3T neamhrialta. Bhí na cruthanna difriúil mar gheall go raibh Caoimhe í féin difriúil. Bhí sí ag iarraidh daoine eile a thabhairt chuig an gcaisleán mar go raibh sí chomh huaigheach.

Dúirt Caoimhe gur scoil spráúil a bhí sa gcaisleán agus thosaigh daoine ag teacht. Ach i ndáiríre, scoil mhata a bhí inti. Cheap sí go raibh gach duine go dona ag mata. Chaith daoine 15 ceist a fháil i gceart chun an caisleán a fhágáil, mar sin, chum sí ceisteanna a bhí an-an-deacair ionas nach mbeadh daoine in ann fágáil go deo...



Tríona Nic Fhinn **Oifigeach Oideachais (ETIM),** **An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta**

Is togra ceannródaíoch é an togra 1, 2 Spraoi!, atá ag iarraidh oideachas matamaitice a thabhairt isteach sa 2lú haois, tríd an scéalaíocht chruthaitheach. Is iarracht chomhoibrithe atá sa togra seo idir an Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), an Dr. Lorraine Harbison – Ollamh Comhlach san Oideachas Matamaitice ag Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath agus ball de chuid CASTeL – agus foireann Fighting Words. Is iad aidhmeanna an togra ná matamaitic a chomhtháthú le scéalaíocht Gaeilge, timpeallacht dhearfach a chruthú ina bhfoghlaimíonn daltaí coincheapa lárnacha an mhata, agus go mbeadh deis acu a scileanna teanga agus cruthaitheachta a fheabhsú.

Cuireadh tús leis an togra i nGaelscoil Bhaile Munna mar chuid de Sheachtain na Gaeilge 2024 agus bhí Scoil Uí Ghramhnaigh i Ráth Chairn, Co. na Mí agus Scoil Náisiúnta Thír an Fhia, Conamara, páirteach sa togra piolótach seo freisin.

Mar gheall ar an aiseolas dearfach ó na múinteoirí agus ó na gasúir sna scoileanna sin, leathnaíodh an togra i mbliana chun Gaelscoil Bharra i mBaile Átha Cliath, Scoil Bhreandáin ar an Eachléim i Maigh Eo agus Scoil na Maighdine Muire i gCamus, Conamara, a chur san áireamh.

Chun a saothar féin a spreagadh agus tuiscint a thabhairt dóibh ar an seánra scéalta matamaitice, cuireadh trí scéal agus ábhar tacaíochta ar fáil do na múinteoirí agus do na páistí: ‘Réiteach na Rósanna’, ina bhfuil patrún uimhreacha le haithint chun breith ar an ngadaí, ‘Tic Toc Crog’, scéal ina gcabhraíonn na carachtair ‘Digit Each’ agus ‘Ana Logach’



Tacaíonn cur chuige ‘1, 2 Spraoi!’ leis an mbéim atá sa churaclam Matamaitice athfhorbartha, Curaclam Matamaitice na Bunscoile, ar oideolaíocht spráúil

leis an gcrogall an nasc idir an clog 12 uair agus an clog 24 uair a thuiscint, agus ‘Cad é an Seans?’ ina ndírítear ar an dóchúlacht chun fáil amach cé a aimseoidh an taise ar dtús. Tá na scéalta seo agus an t-ábhar tacaíochta ar fáil do chách ag cogg.ie/tairseach.

Ag eascairt as na scéalta seo agus na ceardlanna scríbhneoireachta a chur Fighting Words ar fáil do na daltaí, scríobh siad a gcuid scéalta mata féin a foilsíodh i mbailiúchán darb ainm 1, 2, Spraoi! Thug sé seo deis do na daltaí an mata a nascadh leis na spéiseanna agus na suimeanna a bhí acu féin. Chabhraigh sé leo an ról lárnach atá ag an mata ina saol laethúil a thuiscint. Seoladh an leabhar seo ar champus Naomh Phadraig, Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath, agus rinneadh ceiliúradh ar inniúlacht agus ar cruthaitheacht na ndaltaí.

Tacaíonn cur chuige 1, 2 Spraoi! leis an mbéim atá sa churaclam Matamaitice athfhorbartha, Curaclam Matamaitice na Bunscoile, ar oideolaíocht spráúil agus cleachtais ar nós comhrá mata agus tascanna dúshlánacha cognaíocha. Is áis iontach measúnaithe iad na scéalta freisin. Nuair a dhéantar anailís orthu, tugtar léargas luachmhar ar thuiscint choincheapúil na ndaltaí agus is féidir an t-eolas seo a úsáid chun múineadh agus foghlaim a phleanáil. Beidh an dara cnuasach scéalta mata nuachumtha á fhoilsiú an mhí seo.

Aoife agus Freddy

Scéal le **rang a dó-ceathair, Scoil Mhichíl Naofa, Baile an Sceilg, Co Chiarraí**

Lá amháin, fadó fadó, bhí cailín óg ann agus Aoife ab ainm di. Bhí Aoife ag iarraidh cat agus buachaill. Ní raibh aon deartháireacha nó deirfiúra-cha ag Aoife. Bhí cara aici, buachaill darbh ainm Freddy. Bhí huscaí darbh ainm Lupin ag Freddy. Chuaigh Freddy agus Aoife agus Lupin ar laethanta saoire go Bostún. Chonaic siad cat ar an mbóthar i mBostún agus thóg siad an cat sin. Chuaigh siad go dtí an t-ostán agus chonaic siad púca sa seomra. “AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!” a scread Aoife agus Freddy go hard. “AAAAHHHHH!!!” a scread an púca freisin, agus rith sé amach an doras. Rith Lupin agus an cat amach ina dhiaidh. Chuireadar eagla ar an bpúca. Chuala na daoine thíos staighre an gleo agus an ruaille buaille. Rith siad suas go dtí an seomra agus dúirt siad, “Cad a tharla . . ?”



Tilí an tíogar agus an phicil dhraíochta

Scéal le **rang ceathair B, Gaelscoil Shliabh Rua, Baile Átha Cliath**

Seachtain ó shin cuireadh Tilí sa zú. Nuair a shiúil sí isteach chonaic sí picil dhraíochta. Thriáil sí an phicil a ithe. Ansin, dúirt an phicil, “Ná hith mé! Tá mé in ann cabhrú leat éalú as an áit seo! Sea, is picil mé ach tá mé fós in ann tú a thógáil amach as seo.” Dúirt Tilí, “Cad atá anseo duitse?” “Má úsáideann mé mo dhraíocht, beidh mé níos saibhre,” arsa an phicil dhraíochta. “Ansin, ceannóidh duine éigin mé. Tar éis dom dul taobh amuigh, beidh mé in ann tú a bhriseadh amach.” Deireann Tilí, “Cad é d’ainm?” “Dill Picil is ainm dom,” arsa an phicil dhraíochta.



Ansin, piocann duine éigin suas Dill Picil agus siúlann sé. Ansin, thit an duine a thóg Dill Picil ar an urlár. Cheap Dill Picil go raibh sé saor ach ansin, phioc buachaill ramhar suas é. Bhí scanradh ollmhór ar Dill Picil. Ní raibh a fhios aige céard le déanamh. Ach ansin, d’ith an buachaill Dill Picil. Ach d’fhás corp Dill Picil ar ais. Thosaigh plandaí picil ag fás amach as an duine. Thit picilí den duine agus thosaigh siad ag rith. Léim Tilí ar cheann de na picilí. Scread Tilí, “Cé thusa?! Céard atá ag tarlú.?!” Soicind ina dhiaidh sin, d’athraigh Dill Picil isteach ina fhear le scian ina lámh agus deireann sé, “Is mise an tromlaí is measa a bhí agat riamh . . !”

James agus a bhean

Scéal le **rang a cúig, Gaelscoil Chill Dara, Co Chill Dara**

Sa Wild West, bhí gunnaí ag gach éinne. Ach ní raibh a dhóthain spáis ann do bheirt. Ní raibh an lacha ansin, bhí sé ina chodladh, agus bhí sé in ísle brí. Bhí sé in ísle brí mar go thóg Joey an Capybara agus Bob an Capybara a bhean, Jennifer, go caisleán faoi thalamh. Ach fuair James an Lacha giolla eile freisin. Ach ní raibh James sásta gur thóg siad Jennifer. Bhí sé in ísle brí agus ní raibh sé in ann éirí suas le píotsa a fháil. Tháinig a chara, Giga Chad, an fear píotsa, agus bhí píotsa aige dó. “An bhfuil tú ceart go leor, a James? Seo do phíotsa,” arsa Giga Chad. Ach faraor tá James fós in ísle brí. Chuaigh James agus an fear píotsa

chun Joey a aimsiú. Nuair a bhí siad á lorg, bhíodar ag iarraidh an píotsa a d’ith Giga Chad. Nuair a d’oscail siad an bosca píotsa chonaic siad gurb é Cheerio an Elf a d’ith é. “An bhfuil a fhios agat cá bhfuil an caisleán faoi thalamh?” arsa James le Cheerio. Dúirt Cheerio, “B’fhéidir go bhfuil, b’fhéidir nach bhfuil?” Chuir James ceist ar Cheerio, “Cad atá uait?” “Tá mé ag lorg saoirse,” arsa Cheerio. Chuir James ceist, “Cad a chiallaíonn sé sin?” “Is féidir liom a thaispeáint duit, ach sin an rud deirneach a dhéanfaidh mé duit.” Thug Cheerio James agus Giga Chad go dtí an áit ina raibh Jennifer i bhfolach. Chonaic siad Bob an Capybara agus dhá gharda slándála le gunnaí. Nuair a chonaic siad James, d’éalaigh Bob an Capybara go dtí an garda slándála, len é a rá le Joey go raibh James ann . . .





Mise agus mé féin



**Dán le hÉabha
Mae Riggott,
An Spidéal,
Co na Gaillimhe,
aois 15**

Is mise mé féin, ní haon duine eile
Mé féin 'is mo chuid smaointe
Ní smaointe dhaoine eile
Is mise a bhíonn sásta
Leis na rudaí a dhéanaim
Ní dhéanaim aon rud
Ag leanúint dhaoine eile
Is mise mo dhuine féin
Agus déanaim mar is maith liom
Nílim chun an t-éadach céanna
Le gach duine a chaitheamh
Ná an stíl ghruaige chéanna
Le gach duine eile a dhéanamh
Nílim chun siúl i líne
Mar gurb in an rud
A dhéanann an duine os mo chomhair
Déanaim agus déanfaidh mé mar is mian liom
Ní aon duine eile mé
Ach mise agus mé féin

Céard sa diabhal atá mícheart liom?



**Dán le Maia Ní
Thuairisg Coláiste
Chroí Mhuire, An
Spidéal, Co na
Gaillimhe, aois 14**

Thosaigh sé le Séamus, ansin Máirín agus ansin John Joe. Mhaslaigh Séamus mo mháthair agus ní fhaca éinne ina dhiaidh sin é. Bhrúigh Máirín sa gclós mé agus chaill sí a cos an lá dar gcionn. Chaith John Joe clocha le mo mhadra agus thit clai air, an fear bocht. Níl cliú agam céard atá mícheart liom? Nuair a chuirim mallacht ar dhuine, nach dtarlaíonn sé dóibh go gairid ina dhiaidh sin. Maidin sheaca a bhí ann. Bhí mo chuid pluideanna tarraingthe os mo chionn agus mise i mo chodladh go sámh. Isteach le mo mháthair. “Éirigh anois,” ar sí. Tar éis an bhriceasta thosaigh mé ag staidéar do na scrúduithe a bhí le tosú ar an Luan. Shuigh mo dheartháir beag, Tomás, trasna uaim agus thosaigh sé ag cur isteach orm. “Stop!” arsa mise leis go crosta. Ach faraor níor stop. “Dún do chlab!” a bhéic mé. Bhreathnaigh mo mháthair orm. “Stop ag béiceach ar do

dheartháir!” ar sise go crosta. D’éirigh mé ó mo chathaoir agus rith mé suas staighre. Luigh mé ar mo leaba. “Cén fáth gur tugadh an pleidhce sin dom mar dheartháir?!” a deir mé. “Ba bhreá liom nach mbéarfaí riamh é!” Tar éis tamaill ag macnamh, síos liom sa gcistin arís ach ní raibh dé ná deatach ar mo dheartháir. “A Mhama, cá bhfuil Tomás?” Bhreathnaigh mo mham orm ar nós go raibh mé craiceáilte, “Cé sa diabhal é Tomás?” ar sí. Ba bheag nár thit an t-anam asam. “Ó a Thiarna, céard atá mé tar éis a dhéanamh?!” arsa mise liom féin. Shuigh mé i mo sheomra ag caoineadh. “A Dhia, tá brón orm gur chuir mé na mallachtaí sin ar Shéamus, ar Mháirín, ar John Joe agus ar mo dheartháir. Ach geallaim duit más féidir iad a thabhairt ar ais, ní chuirfidh mé mallacht ar aon duine go deo arís!” Leis sin chuala mé mo dheartháir ag glaach orm ón gcistin. “Tá an dinnéar réidh.” Lig mé béic áthais agus rith mé síos staighre. Ar an Luan bhí Séamus, Máirín agus John Joe ar ais ar scoil. Bhí dhá chois ag Máirín agus bhí John Joe amuigh as an gcathaoir rotha. Ghabh siad ar fad leithscéal liom. Bhí seacht gcroí agam. Shuigh mé féin agus Máirín sa gclós le chéile ag breathnú ar Chaomhán agus é lagtha ag gáire faoin gcearc a bhí i mbéal an tsionnaigh sa ngarraí béal dorais. “Bheadh sé barrúil feiceáil cén chaoi a mbeifeása dá mbeifeá i do chearc,” arsa mise i m’intinn. Ní raibh dé ná deatach ar Chaomhán tar éis na scoile, ach táim beagnach cinnte go bhfaca mé circín rua sa gclós, ag piocadh ar cheapaire ar an talamh...



De réir a chéile a thógtar na Caisleáin Óir



Joe Ó Ceallaigh
Seirbhís Leabharlainne
Dhún na nGall

Rinne Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair agus Fighting Words na Gaeltachta comóradh an chéid den sárleabhar Caisleáin Óir

Tuigeann Seirbhís Leabharlainne Dhún na nGall an dualgas atá orainn ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar an oidhreacht shaibhir scríbhneoireachta a dhéanann oileán litríochta as an tír bheag seo. Is fíor a rá go mbíonn údair Ghaeltacht Thír Chonaill luaite nuair a dhéanann muid cuimhneamh ar na scríbhneoirí a chur leis an taisceadán roinnte, cultúrtha seo. Ach tuigeann muid fosta, má tá muid chun cur leis an saibhreas scríbhneoireachta seo, go gcaithfidh muid deiseanna a chothú ina mbeidh deis ag daoine óga an chontae a scéalta féin a fhorbairt agus a roinnt.

Is láidir an caidreamh atá ann idir Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair agus Dónall Ó Cnámhsí an tOifigeach Pleanála Teanga le Meitheal Pleanála Teanga an Iarthuaiscirt, duine a thugann cuidiú den chéad scoth dúinn léitheoi-

reacht na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn. Nuair a bhuail muid le chéile in 2024 chun plé a dhéanamh ar chomóradh cuí ar Caisleáin Óir le Séamas Ó Grianna, a foilsíodh céad bliain ó shin i 1924, tháinig muid ar an smaoineamh deis a thabhairt do phaistí scoile an cheantair páirt a ghlacadh i dtogra scríbhneoireachta spreagtha ag eachtraí Shéimí agus Bhabaí ón bhuntéacs.

Rinne Dónall cur i láthair do na páistí faoin leabhar agus saol na ndaoine ag an am. Cé gur thaitin an scéal leo, shíl siad go mbeadh siad féin ábalta deireadh níos sásúla a scríobh! Is ansin a tháinig Bríd-Treasa Wyndham as Fighting Words na Gaeltachta isteach lena ceardlanna spreagúla sna scoileanna. Ghlac an t-ocht bhunscoil i Limistéar Pleanála Teanga an Iarthuaiscirt páirt sa togra agus bhí 150 scoláire rannpháirteach i gcumadh na scéalta. Mar a deir Dónall:



Ghlac an t-ocht bhunscoil i Limistéar Pleanála Teanga an Iarthuaiscirt páirt sa togra

“D’fhoghlaim na páistí faoi na gnéithe áirithe a bhaineann le cumadh scéil, na carachtair, an suíomh agus an phlota. Chuaigh na páistí ar aistear shamhlaíoch, chruthaitheach agus is iontach na scéalta beaga a chum siad. Tá súil againn go mbeidh na páistí spreagtha leanacht orthu ag scríobh go cruthaitheach.”

Agus na scéalta scríofa, rinne Denis McGeedy, Leabharlainne i Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair jab iontach na scéalta a athchóiriú agus a eagrú isteach i leabhar beag speisialta Is Fiú an Tairbhe an Trioblóid. Tháinig múinteoirí agus scoláirí le chéile sa leabharlann i mí Feabhra don seoladh agus ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar an éacht a bhí bainte amach acu.

Tá muid iontach buíoch i Seirbhís Leabharlainne Dhún na nGall as an tacaíocht a fhaigheann muid ó Dhónall agus ó Bhríd-Treasa agus tá súil againn go mbeidh deiseanna eile againn comhoibriú a dhéanamh amach anseo le Meitheal Pleanála Teanga an Iarthuaiscirt agus Fighting Words na Gaeltachta araon.

I measc a leithéid de Caisleáin Óir, Cith is Dealán agus Nuair a Bhí Mé Óg ar leabhragáin na leabharlainne anois tá Is Fiú an Tairbhe an Trioblóid. Cá bhfios? Seans go mbainfidh scríbhneoirí an leabhair seo clú amach cosúil le ‘Máire’ féin.

De réir a chéile a thógtar na caisleáin.

Is fiú an tairbhe an trioblóid

Scéal le **rang cúig agus a sé, Scoil Phádraig, Dobhar, Co Dhún na nGall**



Bhí clann ina gcónaí i nGaoth Dobhair 100 bliain ó shin, na tuismitheoirí Nancy & Billí agus na páistí Susan, John & Séamus. Ba é Séamus an duine ab óige agus John an duine ba shine agus bhí Susan sa lár. Bhí siad ina gcónaí lena máthair mhór Máire agus a n-athair mór Páidí, tuismitheoirí Nancy. Bhí Máire 93 agus bhí Páidí 94 bliain d’aois. Bhí siad ina gcónaí i dteach beag sa chaorán.

Bhí siad iontach bocht, bhí feirm bheag acu le bó amháin agus dhá chaora. Bhí madadh beag acu sa teach fosta, Bengi. Bhí dhá shúil dhifriúla aige, ceann glas agus ceann gorm.

Chuaigh na páistí go dtí an scoil thuas ar An Tor. Bhí Séamus i rang a 1, Susan i rang a 3 agus John i rang a 6. Bhíodh na múinteoirí ag bualadh na bpáistí le slat saileoige a bhí i gcónaí ar mhullach an chláir dhuibh. Bhí tairní istigh sa tslat seo. Bhí eagla ar na

páistí roimh an mhúinteoir. Bhíodh ag na páistí siúl go dtí an scoil agus fód mónadh leofa don tine. Is minic gur ghoid siad fód mhónadh ó thithe eile muna raibh a gcuid féin leofa. Deich mbliana ina dhiaidh sin chuaigh John agus Séamus go hAlbain le dhul ag obair ar na feirmeacha. Bhí saoieste acu darbh ainm Scott. Fear beag ramhar a bhí ann agus bhí sé iontach leadránach. Ní thabharfadh sé mórán airgid dófa don obair chrua a bhí le déanamh acu. Ach beagán achan mhí go dí-



reach. Fuair siad litir ón bhaile. “A Shéamais agus a John, Tá muid buartha le inse daoibh go bhfuair athair mór s’agaibh bás. Bás tobann a bhí ann. D’ith sé béile fraocháin nimhiúla agus thug sé a bhás. Ba mhaith le Susan sibh a fheiceáil arís. An dtig libh theacht ‘na bhaile chomh gasta agus a thig libh? Le grá, Mamaí & Daidí.” Téann Séamus agus John chun ‘na bhaile ar an bhád agus iad breá brónach. Tig siad isteach go cé Dhoire agus faigheann siad an traein go Croithlí agus siúlann siad ‘na bhaile ansin. Fanann siad sa bhaile ar feadh míosa agus téann siad ar Aifreann achan Domhnach. Bhí a gcuid cairde uilig socraithe síos agus a gcuid páistí féin acu agus bhí siad sásta iad a fheiceáil. Ach ba mhaith leo tuilleadh airgid a fháil. Chuaigh Séamus go dtí an Astráil

agus fuair sé jab ag obair i gcoiléar mór, bhí saoieste iontach deas aige agus fuair sé go leor airgid. Chuaigh John go Meiriceá agus fuair sé obair mar mháistir traenach. Bhí siad ar shiúl ar feadh 23 bliain. Tháinig siad ‘na bhaile ansin agus bhí siad iontach saibhir. Fuair siad amach go bhfuair a máthair mhór bás. Bhí Susan anois pósta agus triúir páistí aici féin, Máire bheag, Páidí óg agus Maria agus bhí sí ag amharc i ndiaidh a mamaí agus a daidí. I ndiaidh tamaill cheannaigh Séamus agus John feirm mhór, le muca, eallach, caoirigh, cearca, asal agus an madadh Rocky. Phós Séamus agus John agus shocraigh siad síos agus bhí a bpáistí féin acu. Ba mhaith leofa go mbeadh saol deas ag a bpáistí féin agus mar sin thóg siad scoil úr ar An Tor, le múinteoirí deasa. Ní raibh slat saileoige le feiceáil sa scoil níos mó!



Butterfingers



A poem by **Amélie Nolan**,
age 14, Co Cork

Look, you've felt happy before
But it's always had butterfly wings
Never a tangible thing;
And you've caught it once or twice,
But you wouldn't say you know it personally
It never stayed long enough for that
Like a hookup you occasionally meet.
It always lingers just for a moment,
Before it slips from your fingers like water.
Look, you've felt happy before
But it's always had butterfly wings;
It's eluded you for years.
You wouldn't know joy if it was the wind in the air
Or the last-night leftovers in Tupperware
Or the smell of shampoo in her hair
Or the pills you were meant to take but got too scared.
You wouldn't know joy if it crawled up
And laid in your lap
And ran its soft hand up your side.
You wouldn't know joy if it screamed tears in your face
And slammed the door without goodbye.
Look, you've felt happy before
But it always had butterfly wings.
In youth it was a slow caterpillar,
Easily kept in your hands.
But it slowly turned into a butterfly;
So much more beautiful but harder to attain.
Impossible to retain.
Butterfly in butter fingers
Chasing it has put you through the ringer.
Look, you've felt happy before
But it's always had butterfly wings;
You could never win.

Blood orange



A poem by **Holly Keena**, age 17,
Co Clare

Today, he wrote his holy manifesto
He stopped at nine hundred and twenty pages
He'll gut and eat those hallowed columned buildings
In biting, raving, formulated stages
We said, "but he won't do that
Besides, it's just a book."

Today, he swore to plant a Birnam Wood
Smugly watch it blooming in its slumber
He'll have the witches killed for defamation
And Macduff's head atop a spike of lumber
We said, "but that's not how
The story's meant to go."

Today, he vowed that he would save the children
Segment their minds to binaries and slates
He'll spray the saplings down with pesticides
Then pick them, toss them into wooden crates
We said, "but they won't buy that
They're the future, they can think."

Today, he pledged to squeeze the villains out
The crooks, the cons, the convicts, rats and thieves
He'll build a wall that's higher than the sun
Peel families apart like stalks from leaves
We said, "but he can't do that,
It just wouldn't make sense."

Today, he called to fight, to fight, to fight,
Blood trickled down his wrinkled orange head
He'll live, outlive the charges held against him
The juice of justice; bitter, warm and red
We said, "he can't
He can't. Can he?"

Tomorrow, they will crown him like a king,
A supreme leader, starting on day one
He'll drink his oil and feast his fill of terror
His friends will rule the world and point the gun
We lost. It's true. It's sad.
But all fruit rots eventually.

The slowest way to die



A story by **Robyn Marshall, age 16, Dublin**

He didn't go to his own mam's funeral. Margaret was born into a big family. She had four brothers and four sisters. Margaret was a beautiful girl but over the years it started to fade away. The things that went on in her family messed her up for life. A lot of the brothers went mad, some went to drugs, and some went to England. The sisters were just as bad, with Loraine becoming an alcoholic just like their dad. It's sad because this wasn't too uncommon, the big Catholic family that falls apart from abuse and drugs. Margaret had her first child at 16, Layla-May. Then at 25 she had her son, Jay. Margaret and the father of her children did not get on well since he was an abusive alcoholic just like her dad

and Margaret had gone to drugs. So, Jay and Layla grew up watching all of this. The kids of addicts always go two ways. Either they pray they're never like their parents and stay away from alcohol and any drugs, and they try to get a good job to go far from all of that, like Layla. Or they can end up like Jay. Jay started early off smoking hash, which wasn't too uncommon for 14-year-olds in Swords in the 90s. But he needed more. He could never smoke enough. So, he started coke. And after that, at a later stage, heroin. The thing about these addictions is that it's very hard to get a job since you look so unwell. But you also need money to fuel the addiction, so Jay started to rob houses for the money after his mam kicked him out. He later got arrested and went to prison for 10 years. His dad died while he was in prison. He only got to watch the funeral from the camera in the church. He was devastated he missed it. This is quite ironic. In her old age Margaret was sober from drugs but still drinking. She would walk around Swords every day. One day she had gone to the doctor, and they had found out she had lung and liver cancer, and it was too far gone to try and get rid of it. One week later she passed away in



hospital with only her sister Marian and Marian's children beside her. The last thing she talked about was how she was going to Ibiza the next month; she was so sure of herself. Her funeral then came around. Layla flew in from England. Most of her brothers and sisters came. All her nieces and nephews, it was a huge family. But Jay never showed. After leaving prison, he came into some money from his father's death, and he went to the country and went straight back to heroin. He knew about the funeral; they asked him to go. He said he would. He never showed. Nobody cried at Margaret's funeral. She had been dead for years, just still walking around. Drugs do that to people. Jay's now in the countryside dying bit by bit. And so, the cycle continues.

The lonely candle baby Marie



A story by **Sengu Mariclear Fri, age 16, Dublin**

On her ninth birthday, Marie sat on the edge of her bed, staring at the small cake on the table. It was store-bought, lopsided with a single candle in the middle. She lit it herself, the small flame flickering in the darkened room. The house was silent, empty as usual her mother had left hours ago, leaving Marie alone again. "Make a wish", make a wish," she whispered to herself, her voice trembling. Marie's life had always felt like her home in Africa and when she arrived in a different country a year ago, her battles multiplied. At school, the children mocked her for her broken English. She could hear the giggles from the back of the classroom as she stumbled through sentences, her accent heavy with the weight of her mother tongue. To the girl in her English class, she once whispered about her under her breath. What is funny, what is hilarious about her painful attempts to communicate in a language that is not even her own. She clenched her fists remembering how their laughter rang in her ears. This accent, she thought, tells the story of survival. It tells how her mother tongue endured to this day, how it carried her across oceans, deserts, and pain. So, you should treat her tongue with some respect, every syllable that escapes her lips is born from a riot, a clash of cultures, histories, and identities fighting for dominance in that moment. Marie made a quiet promise to herself. This accent is my guide, my compass. It is how she finds her way home, but on her birthday, the compass felt broken. The weight of loneliness crushed her small shoulders. She closed her eyes tightly and made her wish. It was the same wish she made every night, to feel love, to find a place where she belonged, to have a voice that was not laughed at. After blowing out the candles she sat in the quiet, her heart heavy, "God", she prayed softly. "Are you there? Can you hear me crying? Please, please, send someone to love me." The wind rattled the window in response, the cold air creeping in through the cracks. Marie curled up under her blanket, holding on to the promise of her mother tongue, her accent and her God will guide her home one day. . .

A wonderful life



A story by **Heather Nash, age 18, Dublin**

Ihear birds chirp as I open my eyes, a gentle breeze caresses my face. The sky is blue, free from clouds. I stretch my legs and prepare for my day ahead. Vibrant flowers surround me, swaying in the wind. Towering trees enclose the area; the bright, warm sun peeks through their leaves. Butterflies soar through the air, occasionally landing on

the unusual, rich-coloured bushes and flowers. The gentle sway of the flora can be heard all around. Up in the trees, the birds thrive. Mothers feeding their newborns, others attempting to fly. Squirrels run about, their bushy tails weaving through branches. A feeling of peace encases the area. My stomach begins to rumble, its time to forage for food. I sniff around, looking for sweet delights. In the corner of my eye, I see deep purple berries. I dash over to them and inspect them. Slowly opening my mouth to bite into them, their flavours exploding in my mouth. They're the nicest berries I've ever eaten. I quickly devour them all. I hop about, taking in the smells and sounds around me. The day is hot, and my tongue is dry, I wander towards the glistening lake. Ducks glide on the clear



water, ripples appearing as they move. I dip my mouth into the lake and begin to drink. I feel refreshed. I look up to see the orange skies, it's almost time to sleep. I scan the area for a comfortable place to rest. I make my way over to a tree with a cavity in its base. I squeeze my way in, it's just big enough to fit me. I lay in a ball, looking out at the other animals, birds returning to their nests and squirrels climbing up their trees. The sun sets and my eyes begin to shut. What a wonderful day to be alive.

Fighting Words **Make Your Own Stories**

Feeling inspired? Use these activities to help you make your own stories

Picture hunt



Find all 10 items in this picture. One of the items appears twice, can you figure out which one?

What do think is happening in this scene?

Can you write a story to go with this illustration?



Challenge yourself

Do you want to test your true creative powers? Try writing a story or dialogue using as many of these buzzwords as possible. Then swap with a friend and add up each other’s scores. Or if you’re a thoroughly honest sort, you can score your own!

The Rules!

Each time a buzzword is used in your story/dialogue, you earn a number of points. For example, if you use ‘taxi’ twice in your

story, you would earn 5 points twice, so 10 points in total.

Each word can only be used once per sentence, but there is no limit to how many times they can be used overall.

You don’t have to use every single buzzword in the list, but if you do, you’ll get bonus points.

Variations of a word don’t count! For example, ‘taxis’ (pluralised) wouldn’t earn you points.

Every sentence must make sense! You can’t write gobbledygook for points. Similarly, you should have a reasonable storyline, not just a random sequence of unconnected events.

The Buzzwords!

STRAIGHTFORWARD 5 points

Taxi
French
Lasagne
Spring

TRICKIER 10 points

Whoops-a-daisy
Flamingo
Pyramid
Jittery

SUPER HARD 15 points

Environmentally
Historical
Judgement
Herbivore

Bonus for using every word 20 points

Fill in the blanks

Can you complete these unfinished stories? Look for the blank spaces and write in a word that fits the description beneath. The sillier, the better!

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Adjective a describing word, like big, small, or loudly, helpfully

Adverb a word ending in ‘ly’ that adds to a verb, like slowly, loudly, strangely

Verb a doing word, for example, walked, asked, or saying,

farting

Negative bad, for example, grumpy, mean

Positive good, for example, happy, friendly

Plural more than one of something, for example, dogs, birds

Exclamation something said in surprise, for example, ‘oh my goodness!’, ‘What!’

Last summer, I tried to make a [FOOD]_____ on my own, and accidentally blew up our kitchen instead. It was my granny’s [EVENT]_____ party I wanted to do something special. I knew her favourite food was [food from before]_____, especially with [TOPPING]_____, so I decided to make it for her, all by myself.

While my mum was in the garden [verb ending in ‘ing’] _____ the [PLANT, PLURAL]_____, I snuck into the kitchen. The recipe was simple, but we were missing one key thing, [INGREDIENT]_____. I didn’t have time to go shopping, so I asked the internet what to use instead. I found a website that clearly said ‘When making [food from before]_____, you can substitute the [ingredient from before]_____ for [second ingredient]_____ and it should be fine.’ We had [second ingredient]_____, so I decided to try.

In a [ITEM]_____, I mixed together all the normal ingredients first. Then I added the [second ingredient]_____. Instantly, the batter turned [COLOUR]_____ and it looked thick and [ADJECTIVE]_____. It was too difficult to stir with my [BODY PART]_____ as I had been doing, so I got out our electric mixer. It

was [NUMBER]_____ years old and a bit broken, but still working.

When I turned it on, the mixer span faster than a [ANIMAL]_____ doing [EXERCISE]_____. Batter flew from the [item from before]_____ and [COLOUR]_____ smoke came out of the plug. Suddenly, the mixer burst into flames. I grabbed the first liquid I saw, a bottle of [LIQUID]_____, but that only made the fire [ADJECTIVE]_____. When the flames reached the oven, I ran for the backdoor. I made it to the garden just before- [NOISE]_____!

‘Oh my [EXCLAMATION]_____!’ Screamed Mum. ‘What happened?’

‘I was making [food from before]_____,’ I said [ADVERB]_____.

‘Explosive [food from before]_____?’ She shouted.

I was in big trouble. As punishment, Mum made me [VERB]_____ everyone’s [NOUN]_____ for a week, even though she was secretly [positive emotion]_____ to get a new kitchen.



The thrill of the hunt



A story by **Carrie Magee**,
age 14, Belfast

My once-fiery coat of fur had been shrouded in a tattered cloak of dust and debris, my once snow-white paws turned to a colour of late autumnal slush, tipped with blunt ragged claws drained of their sharp shine by my toil against the walls keeping me within this dark abode. They had sustained no new damage for a few hours or so, as hopeless and discouraged of any chance of escape I had become.

Counting my luck that I had at least not been thrown in the stomach of straw as my brother had – for him, I could hope for only a quick end – I had resolved to bide my time, that should I find no way to free myself of my own accord, Death would hold the key.

However, I did not expect my angel of death to arrive so soon.

I was suddenly roused from my futile slumber by a sudden slice of white light from above. The scraping of a rock followed, and before I had time to come to my senses the sky opened up above me, allowing light to stab the shadow and fill it fully and completely,

a singular, wide, blinding beam of sudden brightness, from which I squirmed, vocalising my surprise in a series of weak squeals and the whites of my bleary eyes.

It was then that I became aware of the noise.

Noise.

Lots of it.

Although it had taken longer to arrive in my ears, it was almost worse than the light. It shoved its way into my skull, tearing at my ears as it pushed and pulled, determined to hammer its way straight through my head.

The sounds were those of monsters. A complete cacophony, a racing, rancid rhapsody of screams and yells and – BANG!

It was a shocking sound. A sound quite unlike anything that I had ever heard. A deafening roar so loud that it almost ran around the track of sound and became silent, leaving only a dull, resonating ring in its wake, a ring which reverberated through my skull, silencing the other, inferior sounds.

From the light, a wide, rough talon reached towards me.

Perhaps *this* was my angel of death, framed by its own cold halo, thought I. And, for a brief moment, that thought lulled me into a sense of false serenity. Subdued and disorientated by the dumbing of my senses, I almost let it grasp me, nothing but my own funeral bells ringing in my ears, spots of light dancing delicately across my vision, my nose ...

Smell.

Dogs.

Run.

Ring on ring



A story by **Clodagh Gallagher**,
age 16, Co Derry

Memories growing ring on ring, secured by stones slotted in and locked together, forming the walls of a sacred building.

It wasn't the physical stones the place was built of that raised it to that sacred status but rather the memories built inside; from weddings to funerals and everything in between. Sometimes the walls were filled with prayers, and sometimes when these prayers went unanswered, they morphed into pleas and then into curses.

This was the case some centuries ago in a town too small and rural to have a doctor within reach, when a plague struck with enough force to render even the strongest farmers breathless, as though fate had deemed their hearts unworthy and held their lungs in her cold grasp; squeezing till they gave out. Despite their shaking, aching bones and the pale, mocking sunlight refusing to lend its warmth, the townspeople worked together to pick up shovels and dig their loved ones a place of peace outside of that sacred building, a place of eternal rest.

As the last tree's buds blossomed into leaves and the last plague-ridden corpse had been planted into the earth, something happened that could be described as either miraculous or coincidental (depending on how much hope lives within you). By each weathered headstone a plant began to sprout; filtering out the scent of decay in favour of something fresher ... the sheer liveliness of the new atmosphere almost tangible.

More time passed and as the walls of the building crumbled, the plants grew until a tree had risen by each grave, dripping sweet sap and watching as, with the graveyard now abandoned, children came to explore and play.

The trees observed in their soft, strong silence, watching as they grew alongside each other, memories, growing ring on ring, a cycle of weddings and funerals.





Primary Stories



The cheesy mystery

An extract from a story by
**sixth class, Thomond
Primary School,
Ballynanty, Co Limerick**

One night, Cheesy was deciding if he wanted to do the cheese run. Cheesy called Rolly to ask him for advice. “Well, should I do the cheese run?” asked Cheesy.

“I don’t know . . . you tried to do it last year but you broke your leg and your two fingers,” replied Rolly.

“Yeah, but I’ve gotten better. I’ve been training chasing the cheese down the hill. Quick, open your window!” urged Cheesy.

There was a treehouse in between their two houses that connected them that was full of cheese and bread rolls, but when Cheesy looked out the window while he was talking to Rolly, all of them were gone!

Rolly and Cheesy felt devastated. Cheesy needed the cheese to practise cheese catching, and Rolly needed the

bread to practise roll-catching. So they decided to go door to door every day before the tournament to try and find their stolen cheese and bread, and no one had seen anything until house 37.

House 37 was a big house that looked abandoned and was full of cobwebs. They were nervous to go up to the house, because everyone said it was haunted. But Rolly pushed Cheesy into the garden and said, “Don’t be a baby, it’s your cheese!”

“It’s your rolls as well!” Cheesy said snarkily.

While they were arguing, lighting struck and the front door creaked open, and an old woman in a pink flowery dress walked out.

“Get out of my garden, ye cheese rolls!” she said angrily waving her cane.

Rolly hid behind Cheesy and nudged him to say that he should do the talking.

“We just want to know if you’ve seen our cheese and our rolls?” Cheesy said, his voice cracking.

The old woman smirked evilly.

“Come in if you want to find out,” she said, and she walked inside and vanished into the darkness . . .



Primary Stories

The magic mats

An extract from a story by **first class, Scoil Chríost Rí, Limerick**



Blue the talking mat was having a great day, until he saw his best friend Pink the talking mat. He had a surprise for Pink, but didn't want her to see it. He was nervous.

They played hide and seek together, and she hid in the garden so he couldn't find her. He thought Pink the talking mat got lost.

Blue bought Pink infrared goggles for her birthday that can see through walls. He decided to use them to find her. He looked everywhere in the house, but he still couldn't find her.

He went into the garden, found her and brought her to the kitchen to show her the surprise. It was a huge party with all of her friends.

While the party was going on, a giant came to the house. He was not

invited. Pink and Blue did not know him at all; he just showed up.

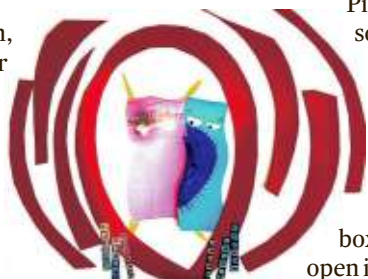
Blue was very worried when he saw him. He was terrified of being stepped on. So, he grabbed on to Pink's hand and ran away. When they held hands they mixed colours and turned purple. Blue knew he felt safe. He changed his name to Purple. The giant was actually nice.

"Wait!" he shouted. "I don't want to step on you!"

They believed him, so they all sat in the garden and had a picnic with some cake.

Pink loved her surprise party, so she wanted to do something nice for Purple. She knew he wanted to be a millionaire, so she entered him into the lottery.

Pink wrapped the lottery box and waited for Purple to open it...



The journey to the go-cart

An extract from a story by **third class, St Vincent's Primary School, Cork**

His name is Babushka. He is on the rise to be the best Formula 1 driver. He is a very fast driver.

He won his first race. He wants to be the richest in the world.

He is training to race with his best friend.

He gets into the finals and he is in a tournament. By this time he's got sponsored by Louis Vuitton. After starting the final, he's in third place and he gets up to second and he's racing the person in first place. They are very near to each other.

It's Sam who is sponsored by Gucci. They are about to finish.

Then Babushka gets in first place. He was trying hard. A fire breaks out but luckily he gets out with a few injuries and he still wins the race. He comes home and goes to sleep.

And someone steals his trophy! Babushka already knew it was Sam because Sam was really angry.

Just to be sure that it was Sam he went to the police...



The Frogalypse

An extract from a story by **third-sixth class, Annalitten National School, Castleblayney, Co Monaghan**

Once upon a time in a super, super, super secret laboratory in a bunker, Captain Smarty Pants and Bob the Frog were practising fighting. Bob the Frog was using laser eyes.

Suddenly, they heard an eerie knock on the door. They opened it and there standing in front of Bob the Frog was himself. Bob was so stupid that he thought it was his brother.

"You don't have a brother Bob," announced Captain Smarty Pants.

The zombies were coming after Bob. Bob was from a polluted pond which gave him laser eyes and the gift of speech.

Once Imposter Bob got into the lab, he started destroying everything. Bob the Frog got hypnotised when he saw his doppelganger.

Captain Smarty Pants looked at the calendar and was afraid of getting kicked out of college. He had missed the entire last week because he had been eaten by a giant piranha and he only just got out of it an hour ago.

"I can't afford to get involved in another mess," he thought to himself. So he used super speed to quickly get to his college in Harvard but he fell into a hole along the way. He couldn't get out of the hole.

Hypnotised Bob and the zombies

were taking over Harvard.

The zombies were woken up from the cemetery by demons. Impostor Bob demanded that they all go to Harvard because they had no brain-cells.

When the zombies got to Harvard to take it over, it was in lockdown. Captain Smarty Pants tried and tried to get out of the hole but, it was just too deep...



One small step for cat

An extract from a story by **fourth class, Athenry Primary School, Athenry, Co Galway**

One day in the afternoon, in summer, in Spain, Lilly was in her house with Nala the bunny. They were on a relaxing holiday in a little town near the coast.

Lilly is a happy cat. She is very curious and adventurous. She loves her family and friends and her favourite food is a stinky blue cheese!

Lilly and Nala met in an astronaut school. They learn a lot about space and maths. There are no people in the school, it's just for animals. They learn how gravity works. Nala really likes climbing, she also likes the same stinky cheese as

Lilly! Nala also likes to draw.

Lilly is attending astronaut school because she loves floating in space and learning about stars. She would also love to see some aliens in space. That's why she's training in this school, to travel for her first time in space, in a rocket ship.

Lilly is organising her trip. She knows it can be dangerous because of objects hitting the rocket ship, like meteorites. It can be really cold and they're afraid of gravity. One of them could get lost in space.

On Sunday 15th November everything was ready for launch...



Fighting Words is working with World Vision Ireland to support creative writing activities with children in Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This long-term partnership – funded by Irish Aid – is part of a broader five-year programme that World Vision is leading to empower and protect children and women. These creative education opportunities can strengthen children’s resiliency, build their confidence and contribute to the bigger objective of protecting children from violence

Why the bat flies at night

A story by **Ayub Tor Dau, primary eight, Melut Girls Primary School, Upper Nile State, South Sudan**

Once upon a time in the forest of South Sudan, there lived a bush rat (Karoo). Karoo was a very good friend to the bat (Emiong). Karoo and Emiong always lived together and ate together. They mostly ate a bowl of nice soup every night. Emiong was a bit of a prankster. He was also a bit jealous of the bush rat’s long tail. Emiong was waiting for a chance to play a trick on Karoo.

One day, while having lunch Karoo mentioned that Emiong’s soup was the best he had ever tasted. He asked Emiong, “Why is your soup so yummy?” Emiong replied, “There is a secret ingredient. Come home in the evening and I will show you.” That evening when Karoo went to Emiong’s house, Emiong readily told him that the secret ingredient in his soup was that he himself would jump into the soup when it was boiling for two seconds and then jump out. To make the bush rat believe him, Emiong jumped into a soup pot for two seconds and jumped back. What Karoo did not realise was that the water was cold.



Now, Karoo really wanted his soup also to be as tasty as Emiong’s. He brought his soup to boil. Karoo was also a cautious bush rat, he decided to test the waters a bit before he jumped right in. He put his right paw into the soup. His paw got burnt a lot. He took out his paw immediately. Karoo was very angry. He bandaged his injured paw and went straight to Samba (the lion). Samba, being the king of the forest, his job was to deliver justice. When Samba heard what had happened, he got angry and said the bat had to be imprisoned. Emiong realised that he had made a mistake, but he liked his freedom and so he and his family decided to hide in the bushes. He only came out during the night when no one was around. This is why the bat flies at night.

The lion and the forest

A story by **students at Taageer Primary School, Dangoroyo District, Puntland, Somalia**

Once upon a time, there was a lion living in the forest. He was an aggressive lion, which made people flee from the area. Despite this, the lion wanted some people to move into the forest. The lion was also afraid of guns and bullets. It rained well in the forest. One family decided to settle in the forest. As they approached the area where the fierce lion lived, they encountered a man who warned them that he had left the forest because of the aggressive lion. However, the family was undeterred by his warning and chose to settle in the heart of the forest. That very night, the lion attacked the family, injuring a boy who was sleeping near the animals and taking one of the family’s goats. The commotion woke the family, and shots were fired in response. By the early morning, the family decided to leave the forest for good and never returned.



Jeannette and the thief at the market

A story by the **student writing club in Bunyuka, Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Once upon a time, Jeannette, a chicken seller, went to the market to sell her wares. She found the other women were also selling chickens at \$5 a chicken. Suddenly it started raining. Jeannette decided to take shelter in a nearby plot. A thief came and stole one of Jeannette’s hens while she was fast asleep in the rain. When she woke up, Jeannette asked: “Who stole my hen?” The people told her to go to the market and see if her chicken was there. She found someone selling her chicken. Jeannette asked him where the chicken she was selling came from. She replied, “It is my hen. I breed hens in Isonga village.” A verbal argument ensued between Jeannette and this person. The other sellers confirmed that the hen was indeed Jeannette’s. The thief was taken to the market office for discussion. After listening to all the parties, the market authorities ordered the thief to pay double the value of the stolen chicken. Moral lesson: be careful of thieves at the market.

National Learning Network

National Learning Network is an education and training provider for people with additional needs and/or disabilities. Students at National Learning Network Limerick came together in two groups over six weeks to write this play using our Story Seeds method. The play dealt with key themes such as trust, care and friendship, and balances these serious themes with moments of humour

The world regains its colour

An extract from a play written by students through National Learning Network Limerick

Setting
California, high school, set in study hall.

Characters
Alex, Rebecca, Mrs Jefferson, Eric, Siobhán, extras.

Act One, Scene One
Full classroom, everyone is talking to each other, first day back at school. People are sitting on desks, and congregated around different tables. Teacher comes in from stage left, looking grumpy and groggy.

Teacher: *Walking to desk, quiet, mumbling, straining.* Students, can I have your attention please?

Everyone keeps chatting.

Teacher: *Gets to desk, little louder.* Quiet please! Stop talking to each other!

Everyone keeps talking.

Teacher: *Gets to her desk, shouting.*



SILENCE! *She hits a ruler off the desk so hard it breaks.*

Everyone rushes to their seat, and once seated they are shifting uncomfortably. There is silence.

Teacher: *Slow on her words, walking to*

the door. All right, before I take the roll call, Rebecca enters, we have a transfer student, Rebecca Jones. Rebecca, would you like to introduce yourself to the class?

Rebecca stands in front of the class, nervously, but she is upbeat, lovely and nice.

Rebecca: Hello everyone, my name is Rebecca Jones. I'm a transfer student from Chicago. I love playing basketball and listening to music, especially hip-hop so I'm really excited to be here because I love West Coast rap music. I also love the beach. So if anyone would like to hang out at Venice Beach after school, I'd love to make some friends!

Some students are sleepy, most are listening to her and looking at her in awe. Alex, is not really paying attention, and has his head down doodling.

Rebecca walks down and sits in the row behind Alex, and he looks at her while she passes, but he looks away shyly.

Teacher: *More settled and awake.* Siobhán, can you show Rebecca around after this period?

Eric: *Puts up his hand.* Mrs Jefferson, I can show her around. *He turns around to face Rebecca.* I'm sure she wants to sign up for the basketball team, right?

Teacher: *Annoyed.* I asked Siobhán, Eric. It's a nice gesture, but I think Rebecca would be more comfortable with another girl.

Eric looks agitated, but changes his expression to not show his true emotions because he needs to appear like he is calm and collected and not annoyed.

Alex: *Sneers at Eric and mutters under his breath.* Good save there, teach.

Eric glares back.

Teacher: All right, time for your first lesson of History 101. Everyone open your books to chapter one.

Alex smiles and looks up attentively – history is his favourite subject. He goes to open his book, and knocks a pencil on the ground. When he turns to pick up, Rebecca has also reached down and is smiling at him. He grabs it, and turns away without acknowledging her. She is surprised at the reaction but she gets back to her books.

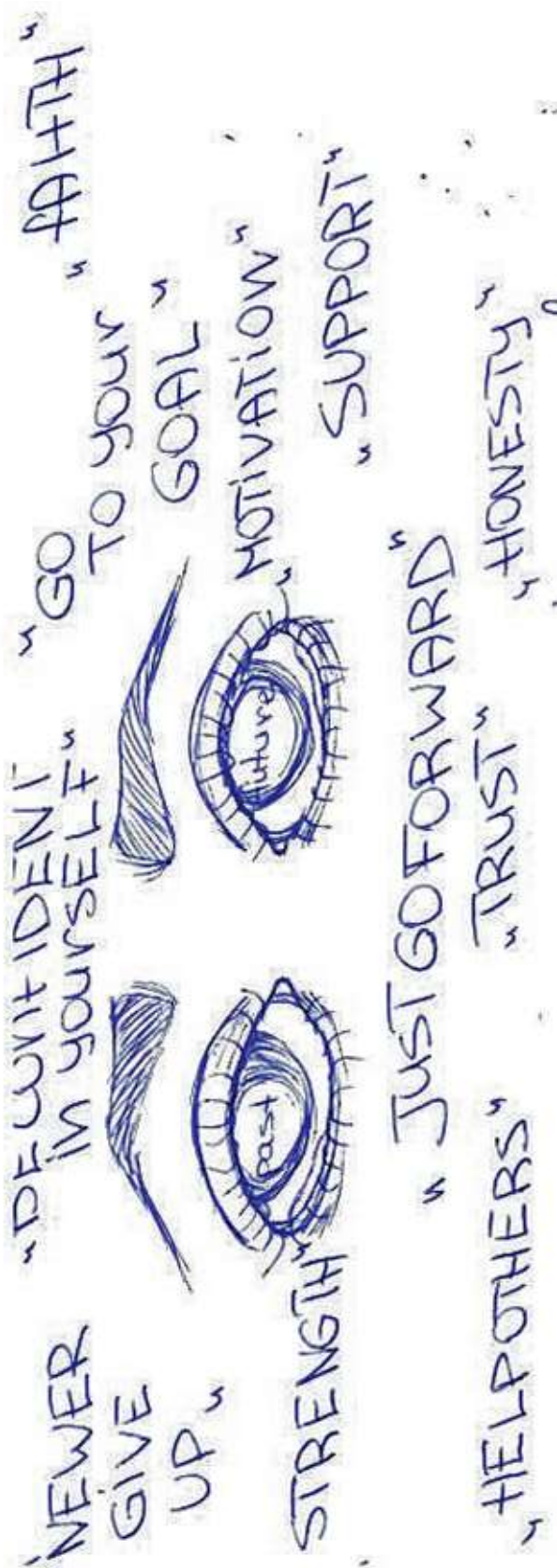
Lights fade down – end scene.

Students from Youthreach Limerick (O’Connell Avenue Campus) worked with Fighting Words staff and volunteers over four days in June 2024 to develop a creative zine. This included poetry, memoirs, illustrations and songwriting. The full zine can be accessed at fightingwords.ie, and includes songs written by the students with help from Colm Quearney

The path we forge

A poem by **Mariia Avidieiva**, a student at Youthreach Limerick

Upon the threshold, life begins anew.
A journey vast, a vision to pursue.
With steady hands, we carve our way,
Through trial faced, through night and day,
No guiding hand no voice to steer.
The weight of choice grows sharp and clear.
A stop alone, a leap of trust,
In dreams and grit, we place our trust.
The climb is steep, the air runs thin
Yes, fires ignite where doubts have been.
For in the toil, the truth is found:
To stand alone is strength unbound.
Through fleeting storm and skies alight,
We chase the stars; we claim the might.
A life we build, with pride we see,
A testament to what can be.
For in the mirror, bold and true,
The self we forged comes in to view.
No chains of fear, no bounds to bind
A life that’s ours, a freeborn mind.



From the first glance

A song written by a group of students at **Youthreach Limerick** in June 2024

Verse 1
In a world where drugs are rife,
Inequality cuts like a knife.
Some get help, others face strife,
Addressing this issue is key to improve life.
Drugs mess with your brain, then your family feels the pain
Watching on in disdain.

Chorus
They know each other from the first glance,
Watching for someone to take a stance.
From the inside you know each better,
From the outside you’re nothing but a feather.
They say don’t judge a book by its cover,
But when I’m seen, I’m viewed as an other.

Verse 2
Drugs are only good for thugs,
Burned out vehicles, windows getting broken,
Youngfellas sitting on a wall just smoking.
Yo, in the streets where the drugs flow,
Inequality’s a heavy blow.
Some get high, others feel low,
If someone offers drugs,
Please say no!

Chorus
They know each other from the first glance,
Watching for someone to take a stance.
From the inside you know each better,
From the outside you’re nothing but a feather.
They say don’t judge a book by its cover,
But when I’m seen, I’m viewed as an other.

Bridge
There needs to be a realisation
Of the penalisation.
Bad things happen,
It can make you go nappin’
And then you go tappin’
And you’ll start snappin’.

Chorus
They know each other from the first glance,
Watching for someone to take a stance.
From the inside you know each better,
From the outside you’re nothing but a feather.
They say don’t judge a book by its cover,
But when I’m seen, I’m viewed as an other.



Short

A poem by **Jodie Corbett**,
a student at Youthreach
Limerick City

In a whisper soft where hearts align
A gentle touch, a hand in mine
With every single smile, a spark ignites
Kindness blooms in endless lights

A world of hope, a listening ear
In simple acts we draw near.
Together we weave a brighter day,
In kindness, love shall find its way.

Transgender Equality Network Ireland (Teni) is an advocacy, support and education organisation that focuses on the issues and needs of transgender and gender diverse people in Ireland. Each year, Teni hosts a family residential weekend for families who have trans children and/or young people. At last year's weekend, the organisation worked with a group of trans young people on fantasy world-building through writing, where they could imagine a world where trans and gender diverse people are not framed in a negative light.

The needle

An extract from a story by **trans-gender and gender diverse young people**, who participated in a workshop during a residential weekend with Transgender Equality Network Ireland

Long ago, Sorrel the foraging elf lived a peaceful life in their small cottage, but alas, Sorrel really didn't like this house. Sorrel couldn't invite their best friends over because their house was too tiny: they only had a livingroom, kitchen and bedroom – all packed into the one room!

Winter was coming, and it was getting too cold to meet up outside. Harper the androgynous witch liked to couch surf and Kellie the lesbian siren lived underwater, so they couldn't meet up at their houses either.

Sorrel wanted to live in a nice insulated treehouse, with fairy lights all over. They wanted it to be in a tall tree with one big bed that they could share for sleepovers. They dreamed of having a little wooden elevator to go up to the house that ran through the trunk of the tree.

But of course, such a build was extremely expensive and they could not afford it. Being a forager is a low-paying job, and they mostly work in bartering.

Kellie, being a siren, wasn't able to visit too often, so Harper and Sorrel would sometimes visit her at her lake. Kellie hated fishermen, because they disrupted the lake and fish up all her fishy friends. Sorrel and Harper didn't mind the fisherman: Sorrel bartered with them, so they needed them, and Harper sold them potions to make the fish bite.

One day, as the two came to visit to go surfing with

Kellie, they saw her being caught in a fisherman's net. "AHHHHHHH!" screamed Kellie.

"Put down that lesbian at once!" Sorrel demanded. Sorrel shook their fists at the fisherman and ran towards the stony pier.

Harper, ever the practical one, walked forward calmly, took out a knife and started to cut Kellie loose. The fisherman nervously backed away from the side of the boat, hands raised in surrender.

As the fisherman was distracted with Harper, Sorrel swooped in, grabbing Kellie from the ripped fishing net.

Kellie was wailing loudly, thrashing in the net until Harper cut her loose and Sorrel rescued her.

"Let me at 'em!" Kellie said furiously, lunging at the fisherman.

Harper quickly grabbed Kellie and began to drag her back to Sorrel's tiny cottage, and Sorrel skipped behind them.

"Next time someone tries to catch me, I'm gonna eat them," said Kellie, deadpan.

"Calm down, ya crazy lesbian," Harper said. "Let's all cheer ourselves up and get some piercings."

Harper was covered in tattoos of potion doodles, and had lots of piercings.

"Absolutely!" Kellie said enthusiastically.

Sorrel froze at the idea of getting a live piercing. Harper had always given them a sleeping draught to make sure they didn't have to see or feel the needle.

Harper noticed Sorrel looking upset, and said: "It's okay, there's nothing to be afraid of, it's over in two seconds! But I'll get you some sleeping draught anyway."

Taking their bag off their back and placing it on the floor, Harper rummaged through the contents. A look of confusion crossed their face.

"It's not there."

To be continued . . .



Story Seeds goes international

From Ireland to Italy (and back again!)
An arts and social inclusion project funded by Erasmus +

Fighting Words is very excited to be participating in its very first Léargas Erasmus + project funded by the European Union, Story Seeds: From Ireland to Italy (and back again!), in collaboration with our Milan-based sister organisation, La Grande Fabbrica Della Parole.

The project is using the tool of creative writing to address issues of social equity and access. Students from 24 classes (12 in Milan and 12 in Ireland) will contribute to six unique stories. The stories will pass from the young Irish writers to the young Italian writers and back again, like a relay race! The project is particularly focusing on place – celebrating the connection between young people and their communities. One story features the Purple Monster of the Naviglio canal in Milan who must face down his nemesis, Paddy

the Scientist from Athy. Another story features two girls from Milan who set off to discover if the world is really made of cheese, only to crash-land in Tallaght. As the stories pass back and forth, the students learn about each other’s homeplace.

The stories will be published as a storybook and launched online. We will also create a Practice Guide for teachers or creative facilitators interested in exploring creative writing in their work. Keep an eye out for our webinar later in the year where we will launch this guide.

Below is an extract from one of the stories with contributions from Class 3A, Scuola Primaria Ferraris, IC Sant’Ambrogio, Milan and fourth class from Scoil Aoife Community National School, Citywest, Co Dublin.

The secret of the aliens and the moon

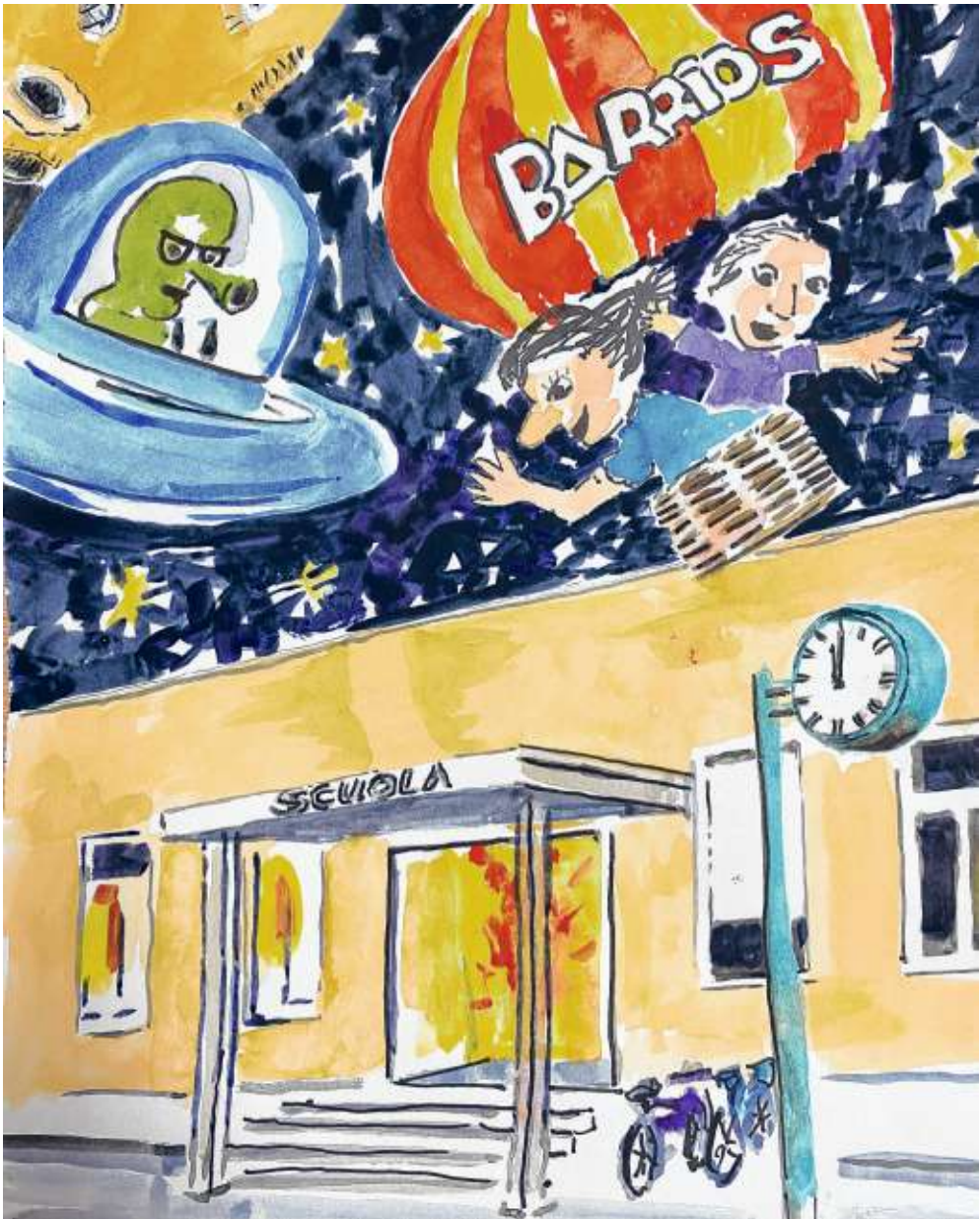
Chapter one: The Cheese Moon

One fine day, an older but short girl named Iris and a younger but tall girl named Isabella decide they want to leave their home, which is in Milan, in the Barona-Sant’Ambrogio neighbourhood. They want to find out if the moon is made of cheese: from Earth, with all those holes, it really looks like it’s made of cheese!

As for transportation, they first consider a car, but neither of them has a driver’s license. They think about taking the train, but then realise there are no tracks between Earth and the moon. Finally, they figure out that flying is the best option: they would use a hot air balloon!

They depart right from the courtyard of their school and quickly rise up with their hot air balloon. From above, they can see the school and the neighborhood like never before: they see the courtyard where they play every day, as well as the Barrio’s, the oratory, and the church!

They slowly approach the moon with their hot air balloon. They even manage to avoid a meteor shower, but suddenly an alien approaches them in a spaceship. The alien’s job is to protect the secret of the cheese moon, and for this reason, the alien destroys their hot air balloon by shooting it with laser cannons.



Chapter two: The Cheese Apocalypse

It sounded like a tyre being popped as the hot air balloon fell from the sky. Luckily, the balloon had a backup parachute. Iris and Isabella felt relieved. The hot air balloon crash landed in a field just outside Tallaght.

They saw an odd person hiding in the bushes and went to investigate. They found an alien watching them.

“Hi, who are you?” asked Iris.

“My name Is Goobal.”

“Do you know anywhere we can get some food?” asked Isabella.

Goobal answered, “Perios Grill.”

Randomly, they found a blue and purple Lamborghini in the bushes. Goobal got behind the wheel and they sped into Tallaght passing The Square, Domino’s and Tallaght Leisure Centre.

When they found a seat, they ordered spicy, spicy, spicy chicken wings and had the biggest smiles ever.

To be continued . . .

Chapter two has been edited for publication, and the full story can be found in the upcoming Story Seeds collection

Primary Stories

Jeremy the giraffe and the case of the golden banana

An extract from a story by **fifth class, Scoil Naomh Eoin, Killenard, Co Laois**

“I want the gold banana!” shouts Jeremy. Jeremy is a giraffe, miniature in size and he needs the banana. He is standing in front of his mirror, in his toilet-free bathroom, brushing his teeth with his banana-flavoured toothpaste.

Jeremy steps down off the stool. He is in the presidential suite of The Heritage Hotel, Killenard, Co Laois, where he lives. He lives there because he is Lord Portarlinton, and his current house, Emo Court is being renovated to remove all the toilets.

The previous week, Jeremy had gone to Killenard School where the teacher, Ms Baguette, the French-accented spider, who is the substitute teacher for Ms Skehan in fifth class, had told them some local news. The only big gold banana in the world, the size of a chair, is coming from Australia and is going on a parade through Ireland. It's first stop is Laois and Jeremy is invited to see it because he is Lord Portarlinton after all.

Jeremy is getting dressed for the special banana visit and he puts on his special suit with a banana motif, his gold glasses and his solid gold chains which read, “I'm the banana king”. Jeremy wants the golden banana because Ms Baguette told them that it grants its owner more power.

Jeremy wants to take over all of Leinster and become The King! Ms Baguette knows this because her grandspider created the golden banana with magic, using an enchanted tome, The Sorcerer's Banana Cookbook by Dorothy, the Wizard of Bananas.

On his way to the parade on Main St in Portarlinton, outside the library and just around the corner from the swimming pool, Jeremy accidentally gets lost in the portaloo area. He is terrified and freaked out. Jeremy exclaims: “I'm so afraid of toilets. Whatever shall I do?” And then, Jimmy the sky-blue cow, drops out of the sky on a zip line from a helicopter and falls on top of Jeremy. A rabbit hops out of his top hat because Jimmy is a moogician. Jimmy says: “Sorry sir,



here's your nuclear codes so you can launch your nuclear missile at the portaloos!” Jeremy says: “Stop milking it and get off me!”

Jimmy comforts Jeremy and gives him a big hug because he knows he is terrified of toilets. “I know you're scared of toilets from when you were flushed down one when you were a toy. Even though it turned you into a real giraffe!”

Meanwhile, in Derryounce Woods, gathered together in one of the disused railway cars, a team of thieves, The Terrible Trio, discuss plans to steal the golden banana. Gary the oversized snail, Milly the miniature Monkey and Bob the sunglass-wearing ghost plot their deed. They drive the railway car using the old train lines until they reach their horse, Merrylegs and using the carriage, they then gallop off towards the parade. The carriage gets caught in Merrylegs tail, and the terrible trio worried about their horse, bring her to Karla the vet in Portarlinton Vet Centre to get help.

The Golden Banana is in the Community Centre, next to the swimming pool. Jeremy and Jimmy head towards it in the helicopter. Jimmy is piloting his lordship to see the banana. The helicopter lands in the playground and just then the Terrible Trio come out of the vets with Merrylegs who is all better.

Gary who was friends with Jeremy in secondary school recognises Jeremy as the giraffe who hired them to steal the banana! “Hello Boss,” Gary says. Jimmy faints in shock. Jeremy shouts, “Where is my banana?” Bob says, “We were at the vets, so we haven't gotten it yet.” They all turned to the plush red cushioned stand to find the banana was gone!

Then out of nowhere, Jimmy pulls out his sharpened Twix gun, fires venomous caramel bars at them all, making them dance the macarena, grabs the golden banana and flies away in his helicopter, shouting “See you later moosers!” Moooha ha ha ha ...



I am the River Seine

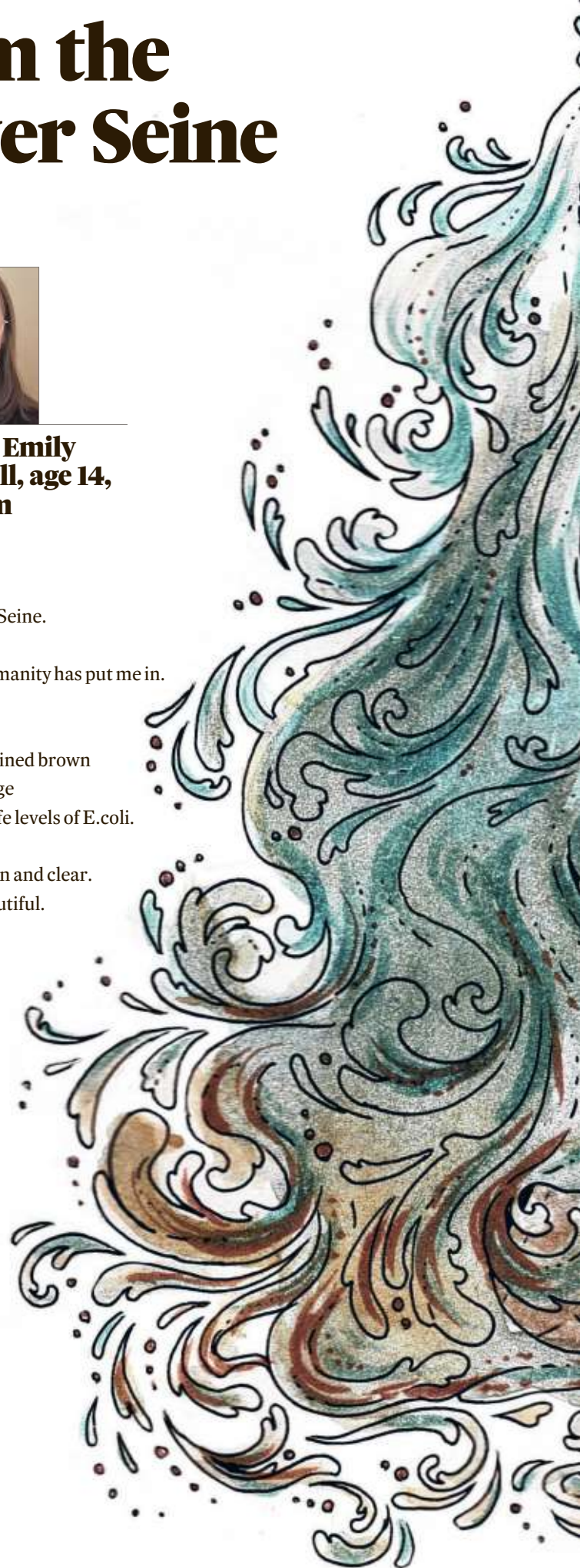


A poem by **Emily McDonnell, age 14, Co Antrim**

I am the River Seine.
I am sick
of the state humanity has put me in.

It's dreadful.
I have been stained brown
with raw sewage
and their unsafe levels of E.coli.

I was once clean and clear.
I was once beautiful.





Blue



A poem by **Emily Abayawickrema, age 17, Dublin**

On day one, blue disappeared from our screens;
the glare of a phone no longer hurt your eyes in the dark,
images became impossible to view,
magic left movies.

On day two, it vanished from our bodies;
veins became invisible,
every boy who'd ever been told he had ocean eyes mourned,
bruises were now only green.

On day three, we lost blue ink;
cartographers wept,
star charts were illegible,
manuscripts penned in blue ink ceased to exist.

On day four, blue left nature;
berries went dull and hyacinths died,
peacocks lost their plumage,
their rich feathers going brown.

On day five, the planets lost blue;
Saturn looked lifeless,
Venus turned yellow,
Neptune went black.

On day six, the sea went dark;
bioluminescence was no more,
navigation became a lost art,
prey sat waiting in grey sludge.

On day seven, blue was gone;
the sky had taken its leave,
Earth looked lonely, lost and alone,
all anyone felt was grief.

Somewhere around six



A poem by
Snizhana Rauth
Age 18, Co Laois

I remember a time when I was small,
somewhere around six.
I'd always worry about not knowing
what happens next.

My grandma would say:
"You're too young, it doesn't matter.
Just enjoy your life while you can do that."
But I wouldn't stop thinking:

What happens when we die?

I'm terrified, and I feel it in my skin,
my stomach, my bones.
What happens when I die?
And I'm trembling.

She wouldn't answer that honestly.
"Honey, you have a long life to live before that.
You're not gonna die.
I should worry about that, not you."

No, not me - I'm too young.
But then we read these news stories about 6-year-olds dying in a series of bombings.

Were they allowed to wonder what happens next?
Were they thinking about death?

Solomia, who will never hug her mom goodnight again,
or Ivan, who will never go to school.

Way too young.

It's undeniable - we're dying,
slowly or faster - decaying,
as a society, as people,
ruining our lives.

If 6-year-olds aren't allowed to wonder about death,
they shouldn't be dying.



The art of hurling



A story by **Charlie Cloake**,
age 16, Co Wexford

To watch it, really watch it, is to be swept up in a rush that has pulsed through Irish blood for centuries. There's something timeless about the game, fierce and grounded, like the ash wood used to craft the hurleys. This isn't just sport; it's ritual, pride, and the generational tales spread around your club like wildfire of the previous numbers of men just like you yearning to bring back the victories of old and to make your parish proud.

From early mornings to late nights, dripping in sweat, soaked to the bone on a Baltic winter evening, the only thing keeping you going is the bond built up



between the team over the years of dedication to the sport we fought to improve and grow in.

The players grip their hurleys like extensions of their arms, instinctively familiar, as if they were born holding them. They strike, catch, run, spin, using that stick to weave between opponents



A poem by
Jonathan Degani
Age 15, Dublin

This is F1

Twenty cars on the grid, ready to race.
When the lights go out, they will begin the chase.
Their drivers waiting, filled with adrenaline,
Each ready to battle it out for the win.

It's lights out and away we go.
The drivers speed up ready to show,
That their determination wouldn't be in waste
And that they would be the one in first place.

The drivers racing hard, powered by their passion.
Some pilots, they perform in spectacular fashion.
While other, their races are over and done,
But that's what it means to be in F1.



or drive the ball up the field with precision and power, with a communal goal to go down as the team who came out victorious.

It's an art in itself to control a sliotar mid-run, balancing it on the hurley, and the best players make it look almost effortless, as if the ball were magnetical-

ly drawn to their control. But there's no ease in hurling; every flick, every slap of the stick against the ball is backed by hours of practice and grit, drills beaten into us as if it was second nature, and the communal pain shared between every player when they find out that the balls won't be needed for the drills to come.

Hurling is speed, yes, but it's so much more than just a group of men trying to race around a pitch to get a ball. It's the heavy slam of bodies, the close scrape with your opponent, shoulder to shoulder, neither backing down, the bravery of soldiers combined with the desire of a lover.

You can feel the intensity between players, the silent understanding that they're pushing themselves for something bigger – their team, their parish, their county.

While the crowd erupts in cheers, groans, and the gasps of mothers willing their team on like the game is a matter of life or death, players focus only on the next moment, the next move. The field stretches before them, vast, with endless ways to create a club legacy that could be passed down through the generations, immortalised in your club's history. To watch is to see the free. To play is to be immortal.



Homeless in Dublin



A story by **Abbie Martin, age 15, Dublin**

I lost my apartment about a month ago. I don't have anywhere to go, so I spend my time on the streets of Dublin.

I walk around for hours just watching other people live their lives. Sometimes I'll sit on a corner with an old cup in my cold hands hoping I'll get some change. I don't like doing it, it's embarrassing, but any money I get can help me.

It's hard to just sit around begging, especially when the days start to get colder. While begging, most people won't even look at you, they're too busy thinking about themselves and their own lives to care about what's going on at their feet.

During the day, instead of thinking about the situation I'm in, I like to let my mind wander. I like to imagine that I still have a good job, my apartment and my friends. But I don't have any of it any more, because a few months ago when I lost my good job, I lost everything else with it.

If you asked me to describe being homeless in one word I would say humiliating. It's humiliating to have to sit on the side of the path hoping that someone you don't know will feel bad and give you a few cents. It's different for other homeless people

I've met, some of them don't care and will just sit around and do whatever they want all day.

Trying to get a job while homeless is just as hard as you think it is, when I go in to try to get some sort of job, I tell them I'm homeless and straight away they treat me differently, it's like some sort of switch is turned on inside their head and they will straight away make rude assumptions about me, and then they'll tell me that they already have someone chosen for the job.

I wish I had the courage to stand up for myself, and tell them that it's not my fault I'm homeless, that the only reason I'm homeless is because I lost the job I had been working at for most of my life. I've always worked. I've never just sat around doing nothing, even while I'm homeless I'm still trying to get a job so I don't have to humiliate myself any more than I already have.

Being homeless feels like a never-ending cycle that will never change, and no matter how hard I try to get out of this cycle, it will never stop. The time I've spent being homeless will never leave me, I'll never be able to forget it.

Maybe I'll always be homeless in Dublin.

Revolut card



A poem by **Clodagh Hoolan, age 17, Co Offaly**

I don't quite know what you were made of,
Little card of plastic, cardboard, gold?
The only sign you were ever here
Is a stretched little bulge, and
Pale streaks on my phone case.

I'll be getting a new card in a few months:
A bigger thing, platinum, or steel,
With a little more power attributed to it –
As is what happens when one comes of age.

I'm sorry that I dropped you
Somewhere between the school canteen,
And the shop down the road.

And I'm sorry I never found you –
But I swear I really tried.

...

(Wait, how will I pay for lunch)

Tales to Scale

Tales to Scale, with the support of Rethink Ireland, focuses on creative engagements between Fighting Words and Deis primary and secondary schools across Ireland. Creative workshops run by Fighting Words offer positive spaces in its centres, in local libraries and classrooms for young people to tell their stories. Across more than 500 activities in 2024, Fighting Words met 9,352 young people from more than 200 Deis schools through workshops, summer camps, an after-school program called Word Warriors and its Book Project. More than 200 stories have been published at fightingwords.ie

The Shapeshifter

An extract from a play by first-year students at Beaufort College, Navan

Scene Two

2020. Bedroom, O Block, Chicago. Crystal sees half-eaten pizza on the ground and pizza sauce smeared on the walls like kids’ writing.

Crystal: What happened??

Then she looks and sees Spencer on the floor.

Spencer (pointing behind her): It was ...

Crystal turns around. In the dark corner is a shadowy character.

It is a shape-shifter.

Shape-shifter (sings a lullaby):
La, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Your answer, it is downstairs,
Your life is becoming bare,
Go down there if you dare,
This will be your last scare.

Crystal: (cries) Why ...?

She hears her phone ring. It’s the pizza guy. He was knocked out by the ladder.
Now he is conscious again.

Pizza delivery guy: Run!



Crystal: I don’t think I can.

Pizza delivery guy: Why not?

Crystal: I can’t leave my friend.

Pizza delivery guy: It doesn’t matter. Just get out of there.

Meanwhile, we hear the lullaby:

I’ve left you nothing to spare,
No, no, not even a hair,
Of your friend
La, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Crystal runs down the stairs. She meets up with the delivery guy. They jump in the car and drive off.

The shape-shifter follows them ...

Working with Tales to Scale Teachers’ verdicts

“ I am continually bowled over by the creative talent that Fighting Words is able to draw out of young writers, regardless of whether those writers considered themselves as such before participating in one of the workshops, such is the passion and skill of the facilitators. We were fortunate to be offered workshops for all 168 first year students this academic year, one workshop per tutor group, and it has been a privilege to sit on the creative process and get to know the students in a different context.”

Neil Kettles, JCSP Librarian, Beaufort College, Navan, Co Meath

“ Fighting Words has given students an opportunity to collaborate with like-minded peers in order to explore the power of language and storytelling. Through guided exercises, they have honed their skills in crafting compelling narratives whilst learning to channel elements of setting and dialogue into their writing. The workshop emphasised the importance of a unique voice and perspective. With a focus on constructive feedback and sharing of ideas, participants developed a deeper appreciation for the art of storytelling.”

Catherine McGovern, teacher at Breifne College, Co Cavan

Red Ruby

A story by **Fiona Okoro, Breifne College, Co Cavan**

Wind swirls around them, guiding them to clues as the clock ticks and the day goes by. Fortunately for Detective Noone, the wind guides her to a clue that may crack the case after all. A hair, not just any hair because neither Noone nor Leas had red wavy hair. Noone was on task immediately, off to contact the forensic employees to bag the evidence. One step closer to finding their killer. Leas found an earring too that was quickly bagged.

An hour later, the scene was ready for the secondary officer to cross-examine. As they were packing up, Noone noticed Leas’s stuff. What looked like evidence bags were hidden into the M-seams of her blazer. Noone called her out on it but Leas couldn’t keep her cool.

“Why do we have to find the killer anyway? They’re not doing anything wrong: the killer is taking the escaped fugitives off our hands. That’s less money

we have to pay. The prisons are already overcrowded enough. They’re letting out death row prisoners after a quarter of their sentence. So what if the killer is killing them off before they kill an innocent civilian again?”

Noone has never seen this side of her partner before. They have been partners for the longest time. They trained in the academy together, became probational officers together, made detective in their third year together. There was not one thing Noone didn’t know about Leas.

“We can’t choose who we save, Leas. It’s part of the job you signed up for. I don’t want to be the one who takes you off this case.”

Leas says nothing, Noone stunned. They had never had a fight like this before. They were thick as thieves, some even said. People were often envious of their bond, but nobody would be envious of this.

Leas storms off, upset and enraged, taking the evidence bags with her.

“Wait! Don’t leave like this!”

Noone grabs the back of Leas’s jacket, accidentally pulling her hair. Pulling her hand back, she held a blond wig.

Noone looked up.

What she saw was not the Leas she knew but a Leas with red wavy hair . . .



The All-Ireland final

An extract from a play by **Aoibheann Dunne, Chloe Foyne, Farrell Smith and Holly Reilly, Breifne College, Co Cavan**

Scene One

At the All Ireland Match

Ref: Advantage to the other team!

Aoibheann: That’s a load of rubbish!

Aoibheann whips out her hurl and points it to the sky.

Aoibheann: (whispering) I’m gonna get you.

Chloe, Farrell and Holly on the pitch playing the match.

Chloe: Go on Aoibheann!

Farrell: This isn’t going to go well (sings Bruno Mars).

Holly looks up as she sees something de-

scend from the heavens.

Holly: What is that!

Aoibheann: Release the cat!

Catsa drops from the sky.

Chloe: Oh no!

Farrell: Here he comes (still singing Bruno Mars)!

Aoibheann and Catsa jump the fence and go for the ref.

Aoibheann: Let’s go ma boi!

Ref: Ahhhhhh! help me!

Aoibheann hits the ref with her hurl while Catsa goes for his legs. Ref passes out with the whistle in his mouth. He exhales and



the whistle blows.

Farrell: The game is on (still singing Bruno Mars)!

All the players try to defend against the opposing team and Aoibheann sprints up to the goals, hitting everyone in sight with her hurl.

Aoibheann: Get out of my way!

Holly gets the ball up to Chloe who sprints after the ball. Chloe hits it to Farrell who plays a screamer and drops it into the box.

Chloe: Monty?

Monty is wrestling the goalie.

Holly: Keep her lit Aoibheann!

Aoibheann reaches the box and hits the ball into the goal.

Farrell: Yay (still singing Bruno Mars)!

Holly: We won!

Commentator: What has just happened here on All-Ireland Day in Croke Park folks – the gang has won!

Outreach workshops

This play was written by students at Leixlip Youtreach over two weeks in October 2024

The three bangs

A play by students at Leixlip Youth Reach

Characters
Abraham (23)
College student, long ginger dreadlocks, 4'11, nerdy, plays badminton, had a car accident that made him short, deep Scottish accent.

Britnnayy (22)
Struggles with education, blonde, 6'4, glamorous, manipulative, party animal, doesn't talk to her parents, valley girl accent.

Humfrey
Pizza delivery guy.

Scene one

Abraham's sitting room at Halloween. Loud bang.

Abraham: What was that?

Britnnayy: I don't know!

Abraham: Wanna go check it out?

Britnnayy: Yeah.

Abraham: I dare you go upstairs and check it out.

Britnnayy: Come with me but get your dad's gun.

Second bang.

Abraham: His gun is upstairs and that's where the bang came from.

Britnnayy: See ye tomorrow.

Abraham: Britnnayy come back.



Britnnayy: Naawwrrr!

Abraham: Britnnayy stop acting cowardly.

Britnnayy: Naawwrrr!

Abraham: Where's my phone I need to call my parents?

Britnnayy: Not in my pocket!

Abraham: Let's just calm everything down and I'll call the guards.

Britnnayy: How can you call the guards if you can't find your phone?

Doorbell rings, they both look at each other in shock. They look out the window and see the pizza man. They open the door.

Humfrey (scared): Here's your pizza.

Humfrey stumbles backwards. Abraham brings the pizza in the house and puts it on the table. Inside is a gun and a note that reads, 'Come find me. PS I took your

garlic bread.'

Scene two

Upstairs. Third loud bang from downstairs. Britnnayy is looking for Abraham's dad's gun.

Britnnayy: ABRAHAMMMM!!! Oh s**t, where the hell is that gun?

Britnnayy finds a baseball bat, opens the door to the bedroom and frantically runs down the stairs.

Britnnayy: Oh my God, who is that? . . . Is that my garlic bread?

Abraham climbs through the window, with the gun in his hand.

Britnnayy: I don't know what the hell is going on!

Abraham gives Britnnayy a death stare, he is covered in blood.

Britnnayy: Are you okay? What are you

doing? Why are you covered in blood?

Abraham starts slowly walking towards Britnnayy with a creepy smile on his face. Britnnayy walks backwards, tightening her grip on the baseball bat.

Abraham: Hehehe!

Abraham, shoots his gun at Britnnayy and no bullets come out.

Britnnayy: This isn't funny, are you pranking me right now?

Abraham (tweaking out): Legs .legs .legs.

Britnnayy (confused, returns to Dublin accent): What are ye on about ye mad ting?

Abraham (Still tweakin'): You fell for it ya wee lassie, I planned this whole thing.

Britnnayy starts swinging the baseball bat at Abraham and he tries to escape out of the window again.

Britnnayy: I'll get me bleedin' nanny after ye.

Abraham: I'll take her legs too!

Britnnayy: She doesn't have any. She's in a bleedin' wheelchair mate!

Britnnayy lands a blow of the baseball bat on Abraham's teeth as he falls out the window.

Scene three

Abraham comes out of the shed with a chainsaw. Meanwhile, Britnnayy calls the Guards from the house phone.

Neighbour: You're making too much noise out here, it's the middle of the night.

Abraham (Sarcastically): Sorry, I'm really busy here, I'm just crossing my t's and dotting my i's.

The guards arrive at the house as Abraham is sawing off one of Britnnayy's legs, they shoot him in the chest.

Britnnayy: AHHHH you're a bit bleedin' late?

Abraham: You're just like your nanny; you're going to need wheelchair access now.

Britnnayy: I'll get my legs put back on, but you'll be short forever . . .

This play was written by young writers who attend St Michael’s House in Rathmines on February 5th and 12th, 2025

St Patrick’s Day of terror

A play by students attending St Michael’s House, Rathmines, Dublin

Characters

Dermot is from Ireland.
Amanda is from Japan.
A Leprechaun.
Mayhem the Leprechaun.
Policeman.

Scene one

Two friends are going to the St Patrick’s Day parade in Dublin city on March 17th. There are lots of people around, they are moving everywhere. It’s fun, a bit chilly, but a bit scary. Amanda and Dermot are on the bus, where there is a leprechaun.

A Leprechaun: Grrrr! Hello, Grrrr!

Amanda: Please go away!

Dermot (*he gives the thumbs up sign*): It’s okay!

A Leprechaun: Grrrr! Shut up!

Dermot: The parade is good. It is full of green and yellow colours. There is going to be marching and face-painting.

Amanda: I’m excited!

Amanda starts a dance and starts banging her feet. Everyone on the bus starts banging their feet too.

A Leprechaun: Die! Die! Die people! Hey you, go away! You get away Dermot for five years and 15 months.

He jumps down on to his knees.

Dermot: You behave yourself baby or we will call the police!

Scene two

On the train.

News Announcer: Everybody be careful. There is a Leprechaun on the loose. Close the doors and windows. He has a loud voice and he is very angry. People, please don’t go outside. It’s very dangerous and don’t go into town. It’s closed. The parade is cancelled.



Lotus Cup, who is a superhero, can move like a frog. She bounces into the bus and talks to the Leprechaun.

Lotus Cup: Here, would you like some Leprechaun treats?

A Leprechaun: Oh, yes, give me those Leprechaun treats.

Lotus Cup: Calm down and I will give you the treats.

The Leprechaun gets very excited. The police arrive.

Policeman: Hey you, Leprechaun. Calm down and get in the car.

The Leprechaun resists and the policeman puts him in handcuffs. Now the parade can start again.

Scene three

Dermot and Amanda are having fun at the

parade. Everybody is dancing too to the sound of Riverdance – they all say yup! On the way home, they have a pint of Guinness in a pub and get drunk – a bit tipsy. They eat potatoes and Irish stew. They go to a dance. We hear a tin whistle and bodhrán playing. The leprechaun comes back but the policeman has some handcuffs. Ringo turns up too. Mayhem the Leprechaun turns up at the parade. He yawns as he is very tired.

Mayhem the Leprechaun: Welcome to the black parade, foolish mortals. I bring destruction and darkness and shadows.

Policeman: Hold it right there! You are going to go to prison for seven years, 11 months and 15 days.

Lotus Cup: Everybody needs to do some yoga and calm down. Namaste!

Mayhem the Leprechaun: This party never stops and time is dead and life has no meaning. Existence is upside down.

Lotus Cup: Calm down. Namaste! Have a pint of Carlsberg beer!

Policeman (*scratching his head and claps his hands*): Do you think this is funny?

Mayhem the Leprechaun: Oh my eye. Mayhem was never my name. I am Bill Cipher, Space Demon. I am trapped in the nightmare realm for years. I am trillions of years old.

Lotus Cup: Namaste! Oh no! I think you were sleepwalking. I can help you.

Mayhem the Leprechaun: I control time, space, matter. Flat world with flat dreams, I destroy my world.

Policeman: Enough! Enough! Stop it right now! You will go to prison for 20 months.

Mayhem the Leprechaun: I am King from the Second Dimension, Euclydia.

Policeman: Oh my, my, my, my ... It’s straight to the station for you Mayhem!

Lotus Cup: And goodbye!

Scene four

Dermot smiles at Amanda.

Dermot: It’s going to be okay.

Amanda: Arigato!

Dermot gets a bit shy.

Dermot: Thank you!

Lotus Cup: Namaste!

Epilogue

Mayhem the Leprechaun is in the police van and we hear him say:

Mayhem the Leprechaun: The end of days will come. I am going to destroy your world. I will be watching you!

Watch out, Bill Cipher will return . . .

Outreach workshops

The first step

A play by the WAS group at Barnardos, Ballyogan, Co Dublin

Characters

Emma (29)
Irish, has four kids and is proud, kind and caring. She likes to help people. Dark sense of humour. Not fragile. Uses humour to survive. Had a wonderful upbringing. Emma likes to dress well and have her kids dressed well. She has her own style. Her individuality is gone; motherhood is all consuming but was all she ever wanted. Her family hasn't turned out as she expected.

Paul (31)
Charmer, funny, people like him, extrovert, gets on with everyone, has anger bubbling under the surface. His dad has another family. He works hard, sometimes. Building work. A lot of money and then no money. Feast or famine.

Dara (36)
Supportive, present, gentle but firm, challenging. She has been through it herself and is now a professional key worker. She gives Emma the guidance that she needs.

Setting
Dublin, 2024.

Scene one

Dublin Zoo. Family day out.

Paul: Will you get your kids?

Emma: Will you watch him for a minute, and I'll sort the others?

Paul: I'm trying to have a smoke and work out what we're doing.

Emma: Get your priorities straight! We're at the playground.

Paul: No, we're not here for the f**king playground. We're here for the zoo, what you wanted to do.

Emma: You had your time last night.

Paul: I was only out with the lads.

Emma: And we're late because you wouldn't get out of bed.

Paul: You're always so f**king resentful.

Emma (under her breath): Ar**hole.

Paul: Don't start with me. Do you want to cause a scene here?

Emma: No, I don't. We're here for the kids, not for me and you.

Paul: You better shut the f**k up or we're leaving.

Paul grabs Emma's arm.

Emma: Get your hands off me.

Coffee spills over Emma's dress.

Emma: Look what you're after doing to me, I'm a mess. I have to go to the bathroom.

Scene two

Bathroom up the hill. At the mirror



cleaning herself up. We hear Emma's heartbeat getting faster.

Emma (Soliloquy): Where are the kids? I better hurry up! I can't keep doing this ... I've nowhere to go ... he's not always that bad ... he's the kids' father ... how can I make him happy ... maybe I could make him a nice dinner later ... it's just me, I'm exhausted, I'm a mess ... maybe if we had sex more ... is it my fault he's like that?

Another woman enters the bathroom.

... Give your head a wobble ... get yourself out of there.

Concerned Stranger: Are you okay?

Emma coming back to senses. Emma takes a deep breath.

Emma: I'll be fine.

Concerned Stranger: You know that's not okay?

Emma is shocked but she just feigns a smile and walks out.

Scene three

Back home. Emma puts the kids down to sleep and changes into something nice.

Emma (Trying to resolve things): Dinner is ready in five.

Paul: I don't want your f**king dinner!

Emma: I just thought it would be nice ...

Paul: There's nothing nice about you ... and after the stunt you pulled today you think I'm over it. Making a show of me. We hear a baby starting to cry.

This play was written by women who are part of the WAS group at Barnardos, Ballyogan, during five creative writing workshops over the summer and autumn of 2024.
Please note that this play contains scenes of domestic violence. If you are someone who needs support with any of the issues raised you can contact Sonas Domestic Violence Service on 1800 222 223



Emma: I just wanted to have a nice day.

Paul: Get the f**king baby!

Emma comes back with the baby. Paul throws his dinner towards them.

Emma (*Shrieks*): AAAHHHHH!!!!

Paul: Oh, don't be so f**king dramatic. You're acting as if I hit you in the face.

Emma (*Mimicking the concerned stranger*): You know that's not okay?

Paul: What are you going to do?

Paul takes her phone from the table and walks out the door.

Paul: I'm out of here!
He slams the door and drives away. Emma

is left with no money and no phone.

Emma (*to her eldest*): We're leaving.

Emma gets the kids and leaves. She walks down the street.

Scene four
At the refuge. Emma and the kids eating a meal. Shared area.

Dara: Are you okay? How are you settling in?

Emma: I'm all right. One of the kids left their blanket.

Dara: We have teddies and blankets here.

Emma: Okay ... the kids just want to go home.

Dara: Do you want to talk about your options?

Emma: I'm just overwhelmed.

Dara: Don't be so hard on yourself. It's a marathon not a race. These things take time.

Emma: How much time?

Dara: Well, that depends, if you get a barring order your partner will be removed from the house and yourself and the kids can return to the house, or you could get a safety order and he is allowed to remain in the house. The first step is to write a statement. I'm here to help you.

Emma picks up a pen and says in her head, 'How did I get here?'

Scene five
Court.

Court Clerk: All rise for the judge.

Judge: What do we have before the court today?

Emma's Solicitor: Judge, we have a barring order before you today. The applicant is here, and the respondent is representing himself.

Emma gets sworn in. Total silence. It's all action from Paul, the judge and solicitor talking but in silence. Actors acting out what happens in court.

Judge: I hereby grant Emma Smith a three-year barring order.

Scene six
Emma is back in her home. Dara comes to visit the house and brings flowers.

Dara: I'm so proud of you.

Emma: Yeah, I can't believe he's gone.

Dara: The kids look so happy playing outside. How are they?

Emma: They've asked where their dad is and I don't know what to tell them.

Dara: You will just need to be honest with them.

Emma: What happens now? Will I ever have to see him again?

Dara: That depends. If Paul wants to have access, he can look for that through the courts. Let's wait and see and go from there.

Emma: Where will I go from here?

Dara: There's a group of other women that are in a similar situation that you could join?

Emma: Okay, I'll think about it.

Dara: I'm still here to support you. You are not alone.

Narrator: A survivor's journey is never over. Closure is often never found. Resolution is not found in the court system alone. Women find strength and resolve within themselves to keep on going, sometimes day by day or even second by second.

Fighting Words 2025

Fighting Words would like to pass a big note of thanks to all the children and young adults who we met this past year. The imaginations and creative energy we encountered, and the wonderful pieces we have read, have been inspiring and invigorating.

To the teachers at primary and post-primary level who support and encourage their young people to create, imagine and dream, THANK YOU.

Huge thanks also to the editorial committee for reading all of the pieces entered for consideration and special congratulations to all the post-primary schools and organisations, listed below, whose students were selected for publication in this year's supplement.

Beaufort College
Breifne College, Co. Cavan
Bridgetown College, Co Wexford
Cabinteely Community School, Co Dublin
Castleknock Community College, Co Dublin
Coláiste Chroí Mhuire, Co Gaillimh
Colaiste Mhuire Co-Ed Thurles, Co Tipperary
Deansrath Community College, Dublin
Enniscorthy Community College, Co Wexford
Fingal Community College, Dublin
iScoil
Loreto Fermoy, Co Cork
Mercy College, Coolock, Dublin
Oaklands Community College, Co Offaly
Portlaoise College, Co Laois
St Mary's Holy Faith Killester, Dublin
St Oliver's Community College, Co Louth
St Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point, Co Clare
The Institute of Education, Dublin
Youthreach CDETB, North Great Georges St, Dublin
Youthreach O'Connell Avenue, Co Limerick

