



‘Refuge’

**Saint Cecilia’s
School Library
Poetry & Spoken
Word
Competition
2023**

The judging process...

We are grateful to the members of staff who helped to judge the poems against the following five criteria:

- Interpretation and clarity of the theme, *Refuge*
- Creativity/style and originality
- Structure and form
- Language and imagery
- Overall impression of the poem

The judges had no information about the authors of the poems, other than the age category. Once they had awarded marks for each criterion, total scores were calculated and then combined to identify the overall winner in each category, as well as second place and a runner up.

Many of the poems submitted interpreted the theme in terms of war, refugees and homelessness; others took a different slant, thinking more about the idea of home as a refuge. We were very impressed with the standard of the entries overall, and are indebted to the judges who did a great job!

Miss Goodhart and Miss Pempere
The Library

Senior Category

First prize – **Nathaniel Clarke Year 12**

Second place – **Grace Eminson Year 12**

Highly commended – **Ruby S Year 12**

Junior Category

First prize – **Joanna C Year 8**

Second place – **Acacia Davies Year 7**

Highly commended – **Zoe W Year 7**

Senior category - first prize

Refuge by Nathaniel Clarke

Breaths of wind move through this empty place,
Howling voices, a song of longing.

The newspaper clippings of a time long unseen
wander between the autumnal ivy and nail-ridden planks,
Signs of life.

But no,
Something twists inside.
A feeling, cold and unforgiving.
I recognise it.
Maybe in a different time and place
I would have called it fear.
Now it feels like breathing.
Exhale.

I stand, upturned, a cardboard cutout,
Wilting in the downpour without a shelter.
A guttural screech, my fear mirrored wholly.
I look up and see it there, framed in the pearly grey sky,
A falcon, maybe an eagle.
Freedom.
Maybe my refuge is up there.

Senior Category – second place

Refuge by Grace Eminson

Drowning, but not so much
That I can't stay afloat
A mere re-enactment, for
I have a boat

To pick me up, rescue me
Take me back to the shore
A 'safety', a 'refuge'
Why do I yearn for more?

The others are trapped, arms flailing
In a tempest that will never cease
Little do my saviours know
This storm is my release

I long to drown in that stormy sea
As my heroes haul me out
Shore-bound, safe, I must stay quiet
Amid wild waves I could scream and shout

Drowning, now freed from the tempest
Nothing's wrong with my life
My trauma is figmental
They brave conflict and strife

I am not like the others
An insider to them
But just like the others
I find refuge in my pen.

Senior Category – Highly Commended

Refuge by Ruby S

Inky waters lick our dinghy; hungry.
The salty foam which numbs our flesh; raw.
A bright orange speck painted on a vast canvas.
The plastic screams in its boldness like stain on shirt that you'd scrub at to remove.
What a blissful kind of worry in which once I was consumed.
I want to shut it up, our brightness so exposing,
Because like pigment of watercolours, we can bleed,
Our orange into such deep blue,
an ugly shade of green.

A smudging silhouette appears before us, tantalizingly near.
Our wails now with a hint of hope
and a million times the fear.
As the water starts to shallow
we scramble for the shore,
spat out by foreign waters onto foreign lands.

Even this earth is not solid.
I think it is at first,
as my palms smack the surface.
But quickly my fingers sink in.
Quickly the water catches on
and pulls the particles one by one from beneath me.
I lose my balance.
I crumple.
Dragging my gaze to the horizon,
the clouds continue to swell,
they wait, for me, for us.
Like a lion does among the tall grass.
The water laps my body, swaying me gently on the shore,
as one storm dies behind us another is just beginning.
I close my eyes:
Why me?

Junior Category – first prize

When The Bogeymen Came by Joanna C

We are down in the dungeons of the basement
Where nothing lived but the shadows and spiders.
Before they came, the bogeymen.
Now we are down here, in the dungeon, disturbing their peace
It's not our choice, we don't want to be here.
We're here because the bogeymen disturbed ours. Our peace. Our world, our life.

They come when you least expect them, sometimes day or sometimes night,
It's become a kind of ritual, sleep, wake, run and hide.
To the darkness of the dungeon, with the shadows and the spiders.
Over and over and over, day after horrible day.

We are going to leave. I heard my father telling mother.
We are going to go somewhere else, to escape the bogeymen.
Somewhere far, mother says, away to a land called England.
They speak a different language there, have different food and history.
They write differently too, without the graceful swoops and curls so familiar to me
Mother calls it a refuge; I call it miles and miles from home.

Packing our few belongings that hadn't been blown to smithereens,
Into boxes and bags covered tears of loss and longing for the life that we had lived.
Tears of goodbye to our family and friends, unsure if we would ever see them again.
Tears of fear at the rolling sea: the life we were facing now

We were boarding the train and the boat and the plane.
Seeing sights through eyes that burned with tears of loss and longing.
Sights that should have been exciting, in another life. Now they burned with the bogeyman's
fire.
We are coming to a stop now. The roar of the engine had died down.
My ears were ringing, but not from explosions.
Soon they would ring with silence.

It is now a year later, and the bogeyman still comes,
There are still people hiding in the shadows and spiders
And there are still boxes drowning in tears of loss and longing.
It is now a year later, and we still stand with them.

Junior Category – second place

The Refuge of Our Mind: Refuge by Acacia Davies

The refuge of our mind, where ideas and dreams create
The thoughts and feelings inside us, activate
The sanctuary in our head, keep us from the storm
Provide us opportunity, to break from the norm
Our minds are the refuge from the chaos, the home of our support

A place of endless wonder,
Where our minds go on and ponder
To escape the fights of the outside world
Our vision blurred and passions swirled
Our minds are the refuge from the chaos, the home of our support

This place where the weary hearted returns
The candlelight in our mind, burns
We seek a place for shelter, warmth, and love
Crying out into the above
Our minds are the refuge from the chaos, the home of our support

Where thoughts can bloom and ideas flow
From this spark the fire will spread and grow
Flying free in search of peace
Bringing comfort and our release
Our minds are the refuge from chaos, the home of our support...

Junior Category – Highly Commended

MY LIFE BEFORE THE WAR by Zoe W

The memories of war,
blazing clear as day,
blinking bright,
In the night,
they never go away

I remind myself I'm lucky,
To be safe and warm and fed,
but every time I try and try,
I think about the day we fled

I know I can't go back,
to what life was before,
but I'm aching, itching, needing for,
my life before the war

Everything has changed,
since that terrifying night,
when my hope was drained,
my heart was stained
with sadness, grief and fright.

Maybe things will get better
Maybe life will brighten,
but still I'm aching, itching, needing for,

MY LIFE BEFORE THE WAR