

Poems by Claire Guest

Children in Need

So maybe you're born to a rich family,
or maybe you're not.
Maybe you're born to a family with not a lot
of money to spare-
it doesn't mean they care less,
they just can't pay
for a fancy gadget, or posh holiday.
In fact, there's a lot you go without,
and yeah, sometimes you feel like you're missing out
but it's alright,
you'll make it through this tunnel and into the light
but you've heard noises in the night,
raised voices as your parents fight over the fact that money's getting tight-
if only someone could help.

Maybe your parents aren't in such great health
and perhaps they need some extra help
so on the weekends
instead of seeing your friends and going out
you're busy helping round the house.
All in all it's hard to find
space for you to have down time.
Schoolwork, housework, homework, all work
and no play.
A break would be wonderful-
if only someone could help.

Maybe it's you who's not so well.
Maybe you're sick, maybe you're ill.
Maybe other people don't understand
you may be ill, but you're still human
but they treat you like you're not
you wish you had, but you haven't got
someone there who could explain
yes, you're different, but you're still the same-
if only someone could help.

We are the children of the earth.
One generation, just separated by chances of birth.
We are strong when we stand together,
when we learn from, love and help each other.
So don't sit back out of laziness or ignorance.
Be part of the whole and make a difference.

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Christmas 2012

It's November,
I'm not even thinking about Christmas Day,
'Cause it's ages away,
But I put on the radio and a song starts to play
"Oh when Santa brings that sleigh
All along the milky way"
I turn it off quick 'cause I know mom'll say
"You'll be sick of those by Christmas"
And meanwhile there's houses lit up looking sparkly,
But it's too early for Christmas, must be for Diwali,
But a couple of weeks pass, and they're still up; clearly,
Someone's been feeling a little too cheery.
And baby it's cold outside.
The ground is all icy; the wind stole my scarf,
It takes 20 minutes to deice the car.
Going out is like torture, and so instead,
I'll make like a hermit and live in my bed.
December the first
Weather only gets worse
And I'm writing out cards until my wrists hurt
My tree's going up,
And I'm all in a rush,
Late night browsing for gifts 'cause the shops don't shut.
School breaks for the holidays, happy days, I'm free,
Except for revision for January.
Christmas Eve, and it's each to their own
Customs vary from home to home.
In my house, take out is Christmas Eve tradition,
No cooking or washing up keeps us all out the kitchen.
Get a bit tipsy and stay up late,
Or go to bed early to be up the next day.
Come Christmas morning mom'll be up early
To go into battle with the oversized turkey.
There'll be stockings and crackers and presents and roast,
And the usual discussion of who's eaten most.
From year to year Christmas doesn't much change,
But part of its magic is how it stays the same.
So I'll take out the Santa hat that for a whole year's been shelved;
This is my Christmas two thousand and twelve.

A poem for Holocaust Memorial Day by Claire Guest

I wasn't there beside you,
So I didn't hear their words.
I can't truly imagine
How much they must have hurt.
I didn't see them come for you,
And take all you knew away.
It's not right that anyone
Should have to feel that pain.
Six million; such a number
I cannot comprehend.
Unique, innocent people -
That shouldn't be their end.

We couldn't stop the horror,
We couldn't stop the hate,
We can't change this history;
We are here too late -
But what we can do is remember,
In our thoughts and in our ways;
Let these memories guide our actions,
And pray others do the same.

Poems by Claire Guest

Mind Games is one of the poems which Claire has used in poetry workshops in schools.

If the world worked a different way,
Would dull be colour and colour be grey?
Would down be up and up be down?
Would happiness be conveyed by a frown?
Would winning be losing, and last place be first?
Would eating cause hunger and drinking cause thirst?
Would dreams be real and awake be asleep?
Would our lives be spent counting sheep?
Would day be night and night be day?
Would the clouds be blue and the sky be grey?
Would we pay for breathing, but petrol be free?
Would I sit in the corner and the telly watch me?
Would women be taller and men wear skirts?
Would you live in hospital, and go home when you're hurt?
Would trees grow downwards and branches be roots?
Would I have gloves for my feet and my hands wear boots?
Would cats chase dogs and dogs catch mice?
Would chocolate be vile and sprouts taste nice?
Would the rain make you drier and the sun make you wet?
Would my dog keep me as a pet?
Would showers be shunned in favour of dirt?
Would I be paid to relax and choose to work?
Would birds fly in water and fish swim in air?
Would our clothes be worn beneath underwear?
Would the sun be dark and the earth give out light?
Would brides wear black and goths wear white?
Would fire be drunk and water be burnt?
Would I be born smart and my knowledge unlearnt?
Would I be my own reflection,
If the world moved in another direction?

An ode to alarm clocks

My alarm clock starts screaming,

But I pretend not to hear it ring,
What idiot invented such,
An annoying, useless thing?

It does not appreciate the fact,
That I'm tired and asleep,
And rudely it awakens me,
With its indecent 'beep beep beep'.

Even on a Saturday,
A day for lie-ins and rest,
Because I forgot to turn it off,
It demands I press reset.

But the one time I rely on it,
Of course it goes and breaks,
I oversleep, and just my luck,
I'm going to be late.

Poems by Claire Guest

I Hate You is one of four poems which Claire submitted when she applied for Young Poet Laureate.

For so long you've tried to hide from it,
but I think you could benefit
from someone bursting your bubble,
it blinds you, and that's the trouble;
you hide from your flaws,
safe behind the walls you've built up,
but now I'm gonna blow 'em up
with my honesty like dynamite,
and you can't hide from the light
of the truth as it shines in your face
and we illuminate, enumerate every mistake
and you're gonna face up to it and change-
you may even thank me for it, someday.

I hate that you're lazy.
Without me here to push you
To do what you could do
you're happy to leave it there
you don't care
you'll give it fifty per cent, or less.
I want to give it blood, sweat and tears
to raise it from down there to here,
'cause, yeah, you could get by
on minimum effort, and waste the rest of your time,
but tell me, where will that leave you in ten years; looking back,
trying to accept the fact
that you could have been someone,
but you're not, 'cause the path you took was the easy one.

Where's your ambition,
the key for the ignition to drive you, 'cause right now, you're drifting,
a sailboat going along with the wind.
You need to get inspired,
need to feed the fire,
need to pick a heading and take it;
full speed ahead is the only way you're gonna make it.

Perhaps hate is too strong a word,
but I needed you to sit up and listen, I couldn't be ignored,
and you needed a shock to the system, ten thousand volts through your spinal cord.
Truth is, you've got a lot going for you.
Problem is, you won't let it shine through.
Others may contribute, but you do the most to impede
your chance to be the best, to succeed.
Don't be half hearted and scared to fall-
if you're gonna do it, do it right or don't do it at all.
You gotta grab it with both hands
if you wanna stand a chance
of getting where I wanna be;
gotta walk the knife edge in between
'cause there's only a fine line between crossing over
from not giving it your all to burning out like a supernova.
We're destined to march along the same track,
and I'm not gonna let you hold me back
so let's make it the path of the heroes.
No one loves you like I do.
That's why I'm hard on you' I'm hard on me too.
'Cause I can see the spark we hold inside,
like a firework ready to ignite,
we'll shock the world into silence-

Together we're invincible, I know that we can make it.
Our star ticket's there if we just reach out and take it.
Yes, we're two opposites living in one mind,
but you'd better buck up your ideas sunshine
because you are me, and I'm going places.

Poems by Claire Guest

My Star is one of four poems which Claire submitted when she applied for the position of Young Poet Laureate.

My star; my dear, my light, my love,
sometimes I sit and stare above
me, to where life has placed you; high
beyond the earth, the clouds, the sky-
so high indeed it seems
that only in my dreams can we be close,
and yet still never meet,
and I continue to reach, and leap
and long for the impossible.

I know that we may never be.
you are forever bound to lead,
and I to follow far behind,
your light, my guide,
my every hopeless stride in your pursuit.
Yet why do I chase with such passion
an event that, if it were to happen,
would be of such intensity
that I could not bear its heat,
and it would kill me?

You remain unaware of my existence,
yet tempt and lure me from a distance,
and, untouchable as you are,
you light my life from afar;
you touch my world and make it shine,
yet with this brilliance is left behind
those places that remain unlit-
the deepest shadow, darkest pit.
And I've realised that although I may bask in your glow
without it, I would never know
the icy hand that grips the heart
when I sit and fester in the dark.

My star, I fear reality
could not hold your majesty.
Such as you are could not bend to laws,
could not conform to this world's norms,
and so I know that, should we meet,
it would not be the stuff of dreams,
for what is there that could compare
to the mind and the wonders wondered there?
I am your planet, held in orbit;
Your pull prevents me leaving;
ever chasing, never meeting-
I stay away to maintain the illusion,
content as I am with my delusion.
So continue as you were my dear,
I'll sit and watch you from down here.

Poems by Claire Guest

Rumours

A secret passed from mouth to ear,
Meant for only one to hear,
But still the news is passed along,
And every time that it moves on,
Bits are added, missed out, changed,
Until the whole thing's rearranged,
Blown up wildly out of proportion,
You can't see truth through the distortion,
And when the message's returned to sender,
There is no obvious offender,
Who bent the truth to make it hurt,
That's just the way that rumours work.
I trusted you to hold your tongue,
To keep quiet, to not let on,
But you told my secret anyway,
Just for your fifteen minutes fame,
I guess it was just too hard a task,
For you, silence was too big an ask,
You try desperately to shift the blame,
You apologise again and again,
Things didn't turn out the way you planned,
The situation just got out of hand,
You didn't want me to get hurt,
And should have thought it through properly first.

You think you fool me, but I'm not blind,
Your excuses are just hollow lines,
Remorse is not the reason why,
You're trying to apologise,
That fearful look you try to hide,
I see it clearly in your eyes,
For you, it's not our friendship at stake,
What you fear is the revenge that I may take,
But I won't play your stupid games,
I won't tell tales, I won't call names,
Won't repeat what's said behind closed doors,
You told my secret, but I won't tell yours.

Poems by Claire Guest

Claire wrote the poem *One Last Time* in response to the move out of the Central Library building into the new Library of Birmingham.

I stand here, breathe in,
and I won't open my eyes;
this smell will be my last memory
here because I don't want to see
the empty spaces where what I know should be.
For now, at least, the smell is still the same.
It's funny; the smell will be first to fade
from memory whilst the images still remain.

If the bricks had been made of sponges,
I don't think they could have held more,
they've seen so much, it's almost surprising
there's little to show for it on these walls.
But that's the problem; they hold too much
and it's not possible to drain
it all out to take with me;
there's parts I'll never know again.

In fact, no, forget that, that's not the problem.
The problem is the walls aren't full enough.
The problem is I want to keep on adding until they're stuffed,
until no more will fit, and even then
I won't be done
because I'm not good at ends (who is?)
and I don't want to move on
but no matter what I want,
there are endings.
There are always endings.

Sometimes, we can tell they're coming,
and for once we'll treat moments as the goldmines they are,
use all their potential, because we don't want to have come this far and have nothing to show for it,
but sometimes, the endings are landmines;
you can't see them from a distance, but they hurt like hell when you hit them.
Neither is easy,
there's nothing easy about leaving the comfort of familiarity,
you can't prepare for that reality
and what hurts is the finality.
There's no going back.
All that's left is to leave,
and so I breathe in here
one last time.

Poems by Claire Guest

Passing Places

When we were young,
we danced among the passing places
gaps in time
built a land to call mine alone,
and from the black and white bled colour
a dazzling contrast to the duller hues
of a lazy Sunday afternoon
else painted illicitly on the black canvas of my room.
And we fell in love.
I had eyes for your I's only
and you showed me
the extremes
highs and lows, but never resting in between
(at least not for long).

So I find myself living out your life in my head
not that I want to swap my life for yours instead
but the colours that bled
out can overlay
a boring day
and take away
the rationality.

Rationally
There's no point to impossible dreams,
no advantage to twisting the world into something more than it seems
'Cause where's that gonna get you?
can't touch dreams
can't eat dreams
can't spend dreams
can't sell dreams
so maybe I should be honest
and say that the you I fell in love with was nothing more than printed paper and pictures in my head
but, as a very wise man once said
"Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?"

Let's be irrational about this.
I want to fly on wings made of shadows
I want to see the eighth colour in the rainbow
I want to hug the floor because it looks lonely,
and don't you want to come with me?
'Cause that world that I built when I was young in the passing places
never left me
and yeah, it's less often I see myself there
but maybe
I could bind
my world in black and white
and it could bleed into your mind.

Poems by Claire Guest

Sutton Girls Leavers Poem was specially written by Claire to be performed at her Leavers Assembly.

It's been seven years

but finally we've made it here.

Through exams and late detention, house competition,
and exams, early mornings, c3 warnings,
schoolwork, homework,
and exams and coursework
and more exams -

we've made it

to the point where we can see beyond this.

We can see the world

beyond the walls of Sutton Girls,

and maybe you know

exactly where you want to go

in it, or maybe you don't,

but that's fine

there'll never be another time

in your life with all this potential,

and you've got chance to decide what to do with it.

So be excited for these new beginnings.

And though we're all headed different ways

we all share this place

as our origin, a springboard onto the ladder we'll climb to reach the stepping stones that'll take us on
the path to anywhere,

and I hope that in years to come you'll look back and remember
school could actually be pretty awesome -

I know I will.

The poem *Words* is one of four which Claire submitted when she applied for the position of Young Poet Laureate.

Trapping words in a paper cage,
is like pinning butterflies to the page,
their beauty can be hard to see,
until you let them go, set them free.

Say them quickly, spit them out,

sound them softly, or just shout.

But don't leave them in black and white,

to slowly die and lose their light.

Words mean nothing left unspoken,

living sounds that have been broken.

Speaking them gives power to words,

and with this power, you'll rule the world.

Turn words to weapons, their rapid fire

will clear the way to what you aspire,

or form a pendulum for hypnotizing,

slow and seductive to sound enticing.

Use a word as a seed, to plant in the mind,

an idea that will grow, given time,

maybe soft, for gentle comfort,

a soothing balm to heal what's hurt.

The words you speak will always say

more about you than your resume.

Words used well will last forever,

can be worth more than the best of treasure.

Know their impact, don't abuse them,

but most of all, just remember to use them.

Poems by Claire Guest

Wherefore art thou, Romeo? is one of four poems which Claire submitted when she applied for the position of Young Poet Laureate.

It seems you left some time ago.
I can't believe I've been so blind,
that I believed your honeyed lies.
It's like you knew just what to do
to make me fall in love with you.
You gave me flowers, bought me wine,
called and text me all the time-
I was ensnared by what seemed to be
your genuine warmth and honesty.
So I gave to you my heart, my soul,
and evidently, these were your goal;
once you'd achieved them, the game got boring,
we met less often, and you stopped calling,
but I didn't know something was wrong,
that you were bored, were moving on.
The truth, I just could not believe-
Why would Romeo want to leave?
Then you text me- 'It is over,'
and at first, I thought 'What a joker,'
surely, this is not for real,
you've told me often how you feel,
said we were meant to be together,
two souls intertwined forever?
But then you split then, tore them apart,
you stole my soul and smashed my heart.
Left me, gave no reason why-
I wanted to curl up and die.
But I carried on and gained perspective;
a relationship was never your objective.
You tried to break me, but I moved on.
Where I had weakness, now I'm strong.
I got back up when I was low,
and now you're nothing, Romeo