

8E. THE O'CAROLAN CUP 12-14 years

Ann and the Field-Mouse

by Ian Serrailier

We found a mouse in the chalk quarry today
In a circle of stones and empty oil drums
By the fag ends of a fire. There had been
A picnic there; he must have been after the crumbs.
Jane saw him first, a flicker of brown fur
In and out of the charred wood and chalk-white.
I saw him last, but not till we'd turned up
Every stone and surprised him into flight,
Though not far - little zigzag spurts from stone
To stone.
Once, as he lurked in his hiding-place.
I saw his beady eyes uplifted to mine.
I'd never seen such terror in so small a face.
I watched, amazed and guilty.
Beside us suddenly
A heavy pheasant whirred up from the ground.
Scaring us all; and, before we knew it, the mouse
Had broken cover, skimming away without a sound.
Melting into the nettles.
We didn't go
Till I'd chalked in capitals on a rusty can:
THERE'S A MOUSE IN THOSE NETTLES.
LEAVE HIM ALONE.
NOVEMBER 15TH.
ANNE.

8E. THE O'CAROLAN CUP 12-14 years

Blackberry Picking

by Seamus Heaney

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger
Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,
Until the tinkling bottom had been covered
With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned
Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

8E. THE O'CAROLAN CUP 12-14 years

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

10E. CORN AVONDALE 10 - 12 years

The Clothes Line

by Charlotte DrUITT Cole

Hand in hand they dance in a row,
Hither and thither, and to and fro,
Flip! Flap! Flop! and away they go -
Flutt'ring creatures as white as snow,
Like restive horses they caper and prance;
Like fairy-tale witches they wildly dance;
Rounded in front, but hollow behind,
They shiver and skip in the merry March wind.
One I saw dancing excitedly,
Struggling so wildly till she was free,
Then, leaving pegs and clothes-line behind her,
She flew like a bird, and no one can find her.
I saw her gleam, like a sail, in the sun,
Flipping and flapping and flopping for fun.
Nobody knows where she now can be,
Hid in a ditch, or drowned in the sea.
She was my handkerchief not long ago,
But she'll never come back to my pocket, I know

10E. CORN AVONDALE 10 - 12 years

My Sister Jane

By Ted Hughes

And I say nothing - no, not a word
About our Jane. Haven't you heard?
She's a bird, a bird, a bird, a bird.
Oh it never would do to let folks know
My sister's nothing but a great big crow.

Each day (we darent send her to school)
She pulls on stockings of thick blue wool
To make her pin crow legs look right.
Then fits a wig of curls on tight,
And dark spectacles - a huge pair
To cover her very crowy stare.
Oh it never would do to let folks know
My sister's nothing but a great big crow.

When visitors come she sits upright
(With her wings and her tail tucked out of sight).
They think her queer but extremely polite.
Then when the visitors have gone
She whips out her wings and with her wig on
Whirls through the house at the height of your head
Duck, duck, or she'll knock you dead.
Oh it never would do to let folks know
My sister's nothing but a great big crow.

At meals whatever she sees she'll stab it
Because she's a crow and that's a crow's habit.
My mother says 'Jane! Your manners! Please!'
Then she'll sit quietly on the cheese,
Or play the piano nicely by dancing on the keys -
Oh it never would do to let folks know
My sister's nothing but a great big crow.

10E. CORN AVONDALE 10 - 12 years

Dad, the Cat and the Tree

by Kit Wright

This morning a cat got Stuck in our tree.

Dad said, "Right, just Leave it to me."

The tree was wobbly,

The tree was tall.

Mum said, "For goodness' Sake don't fall!"

"Fall?" scoffed Dad, "A climber like me? Child's play, this is! You wait and see."

He got out the ladder From the garden shed. It slipped. He landed In the flower bed.

"Never mind," said Dad, Brushing the dirt

Off his hair and his face

And his trousers and his shirt,

"We'll try Plan B. Stand Out of the way!"

Mum said, "Don't fall Again, O.K.?"

"Fall again?" said Dad. "Funny joke!"

Then he swung himself up On a branch. It broke.

Dad landed wallop Back on the deck.

Mum said, "Stop it, You'll break your neck!"

"Rubbish!" said Dad. "Now we'll try Plan C. Easy as winking

To a climber like me!"

Then he climbed up high On the garden wall. Guess what?

He didn't fall!

He gave a great leap

And he landed flat

In the crook of the tree-trunk — Right on the cat!

The cat gave a yell

And sprang to the ground, Pleased as Punch to be Safe and sound.

So it's smiling and smirking, Smug as can be,

But poor old Dad's

Still

Stuck Up The Tree!

Snails

by Peggy Verrall

Snails.

Sometimes I envy snails.

Sometimes I too

Would like to creep

Into my own wee house

Alone as snails do.

I'd shut the door and turn the key

And shout

To all the grown-up world outside

"Keep out!

There's only room for ME".

Then no-one could say

"Don't do that" to me

And no-one could tell any tales.

But then sometimes

I also think They must be lonely,

Snails.

Flattered Flying Fish

by EV. Rieu

Said the Shark to the Flying Fish over the phone:
Will you join me tonight? I am dining alone.
Let me order a nice little dinner for two!
And come as you are, in your shimmering blue.'

Said the Flying Fish: 'Fancy remembering me,
And the dress that I wore at the Porpoises' tea.'
'How could I forget?' said the Shark in his guile:
'I expect you at eight!' and rang off with a smile.

She has powdered her nose; she has put on her things;
She is off with one flap of her luminous wings,
O little one, lovely, light-hearted and vain,
The moon will not shine on your beauty again!

14E. THE MICHAEL F. HORAN MEMORIAL CUP 8-10 years

Spaghetti Spaghetti

by Jack Prelutsky

Spaghetti, Spaghetti, you're wonderful stuff,
I love you spaghetti, I can't get enough,
You're covered with sauce and you're sprinkled with cheese
Spaghetti, spaghetti, oh give me more please.

Spaghetti, spaghetti, piled high in a mound,
You wiggle, you wriggle, you squiggle around,
There's slurpy spaghetti all over my plate,
Spaghetti, spaghetti, I think you are great.

Spaghetti, spaghetti, I love you a lot,
You're slishy, you're sloshy, delicious and hot,
I gobble you down, oh I can't get enough,
Spaghetti, spaghetti, you're wonderful stuff.