

**BLACKBURN FESTIVAL
SPEECH – MUSIC – DANCE**



SPEECH – SET PIECES, 2020

Verse Speaking – 6 years and under

Oh, What Shall I Be?

Anon

As Mum sits on my bed at night,
And thoughtfully stares at me,
I guess what she is thinking is,
What will I grow up to be?
Perhaps I'll be a great doctor,
A carpenter or an electrician.
Or something far more exciting,
Like a world famous magician.
I might become a big movie star,
Someone who stands out in a crowd,
But I reckon I'll be a professor –
And make my mum really proud.

Cats

Eleanor Farjeon

Cats sleep
Anywhere,
Any table,
Any chair,
Top of piano,
Window-ledge,
In the middle,
On the edge,
Open drawer,
Empty shoe,
Anybody's
Lap will do,
Fitted in a
Cardboard box,
In the cupboard
With your socks –
They don't care!
Cats sleep
Anywhere.

Verse Speaking – 7 years and under

Oh, Oh, the Story Man

Jan Dean

Oh, Oh, the story man
is opening the book.
He's holding up the pictures
so all of us can look.
He whispers all the quiet words
and yells the really loud ones,
sometimes he drip-drops rainy words,
sometimes he swishes cloud ones.
When he reads about a snail
his voice slides slow and creepy,
When he reads about a bedtime bear
he yawns and sounds so sleepy.
I like the dragon story,
he reads it with a roar ...
Down in the story corner
We all shout, 'MORE!'

The Mouse in the Wainscot

Ian Serraillier

Hush, Suzanne!
Don't lift your cup.
That breath you heard
Is a mouse getting up.

As the mist that steams
From your milk as you sup,
So soft is the sound
Of a mouse getting up.

There! did you hear
His feet pitter-patter,
Lighter than tipping
Of beads in a platter,

And then like a shower
On the window pane
The little feet scampering
Back again?

O falling of feather!
O drift of a leaf!
The mouse in the wainscot
Is dropping asleep.

Verse Speaking – 8 years and under

The Last Dragon

Judith Nicholls

By a dusk-damp cave
As the first snows fall
A dragon breathes;
The last of them all.

His eyes are dull,
His memories old;
His breath is pale,
His fire now cold.

The forest mice
Who ran from his roar
Now nest by his feet,
Afraid no more.

He turns his face
To the winter moon;
His claws are furled,
His courage gone.

The first owl swoops
To the forest floor;
But the last of the dragons
Is no more.

The Mouse

M M Stephenson

Hush!
 come
 quietly,
I've just seen a mouse!
I'm not quite sure,
But I think he's in the house.

He may be in the pantry
Looking for his tea;
He may be in a tiny hole,
Peeping out at me.

He isn't very handsome,
He isn't very fat.
His tail is long and straggly,
And wriggles – just like that!

So please tread softly,
And tiptoe by the wall;
For if he hears you coming
 He won't
 be there
 at all !

Verse Speaking – 9 years and under

Blanche

Jeremy Lloyd

A baby owl, whose name was Blanche,
Perched bravely on a narrow branch,
And wondered whether she could try,
To jump off and attempt to fly.
She bravely counted up to ten,
And then she counted ten again.
She jumped!
She found she couldn't fly,
And lay there looking at the sky.
'It's lucky that the branch,' said she,
'Was on the ground and not the tree.'
Then off she ran
And flapped her wings
And said 'These are most awkward things,
For though I skip and jump quite high,
I'm still no nearer to the sky.'
And falling down she gave a howl
And wished she'd never been an owl!
Till finally her mother found her,
And put a great big wing around her,
Then said 'Dear Blanche, don't be upset,
You haven't grown your feathers yet.'

Verse Speaking 9 and under cont ...

Noah

Siegfried Sassoon

When old Noah stared across the floods,
Sky and water melted into one
Looking-glass of shifting tides and sun.
Mountain-tops were few: the ship was foul:
All the morn old Noah marvelled greatly
At this weltering world that shone so stately,
Drowning deep the rivers and the plains.
Through the stillness came a rippling breeze;
Noah sighed, remembering the green trees.
Clear along the morning stooped a bird, -
Lit beside him with a blossomed sprig.
Earth was saved; and Noah danced a jig.

Verse Speaking 10 and under

The Newcomer – Brian Patten

“There’s something new in the river,”
The fish said as it swam –
“It’s got no scales, no fins and no gills,
And ignores the impassable dam.”

“There’s something new in the trees,”
I heard a bloated thrush sing,
“It’s got no beak, no claws and no feathers,
And not even the ghost of a wing.”

“There’s something new in the warren,”
Said the rabbit to the doe,
“It’s got no fur, no eyes and no paws,
Yet digs deeper than we dare go.”

“There’s something new in the whiteness,”
Said the snow-bright polar bear,
“I saw its shadow on a glacier
But it left no paw marks there.”

Throughout the animal kingdom
The news was spreading fast –

No beak, no claws, no feathers,
No scales, no fur, no gills,
It lives in the trees and the water,
In the soil and the snow and the hills,
And it kills and it kills and it kills.

Verse Speaking 10 and under cont ...

My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear

Charles Causley

My mother saw a dancing bear
By the schoolyard, a day in June.
The keeper stood with chain and bar
And whistle pipe, and played a tune.

And Bruin lifted up its head
And lifted up its dusty feet,
And all the children laughed to see
It caper in the summer heat.

They watched as for the Queen it died.
They watched it march. They watched it halt.
They heard the keeper as he cried,
'Now, roly-poly!' 'Somersault!'

And then, my mother said, there came
The keeper with a begging cup,
The bear with burning coat of fur,
Shaming the laughter to a stop.

They paid a penny for the dance,
But what they saw was not the show;
Only, in Bruin's aching eyes,
Far-distant forests and the snow.

Verse Speaking 11 years and under

The Grouse

Rose Fyleman

The Grouse that lives on the moorland wide
Is filled with almost ridiculous pride;
He thinks that it all belongs to him,
And everyone else must obey his whim.
When the queer wee folk who live on the moors
Come joyfully leaping out of their doors
To frisk about on the warm sweet heather
Laughing and chattering altogether,
He looks askance at their rollicking play
And calls to them in the angriest way:
'You are a feathered-brained, foolish, frivolous pack,
Go back, you rascally imps, go back!

But little enough they heed his shout,
Over the rocks they tumble about;
They chase each other over the ling;
They kick their heels in the heather and sing:
'Oho, Mr. Grouse, you'd best beware
Or some fine day, if you don't take care,
The witch who lives in the big brown bog
With a wise old weasel, a rat and a frog,
Will come a-capering over the fell
And out you under a horrible spell;
Your feathers will moult and your voice will crack -
Go back, you silly old bird, go back!'

Verse Speaking 11 and under cont ...

Burying the Dog in the Garden

Brian Patten

When we buried
the dog in
the garden on
the grave we put
a cross and
the tall man
next door was
cross.

'Animals have no
souls,' he said.

'They must have animal
souls,' we said. 'No,'
he said and
shook his head.

'Do you need a
soul to go
to Heaven?' we
asked. He nodded
his head. 'Yes,'
he said.

That means my
hamster's not
in Heaven,' said
Kevin. 'Nor is
my dog,' I said.
'My cat could sneak

in anywhere', said
Clare. And we thought
what a strange place Heaven
must be with
nothing to stroke
for eternity.

We were all
seven.

We decided we
did not want to
go to Heaven.
For that the
tall man next
door is to blame.

Verse Speaking 12 and under

The Owl's Request

Elizabeth Jennings

Do not be frightened of me.
I am a night-time creature. When the earth is still,
When trees are shadows of shadows,
When only the moon and its attendant stars
Enlarge the night, when the smallest sound is shrill
And may wake you up and frighten you,
I am about with my friendly 'To-whit, tu-whoo'.

My face is kindly but also mysterious.
People call me wise.
Perhaps they do so because I sometimes close my eyes
And seem to be thinking.
The way I think is not like yours, I need
No thick philosopher's book;
I can tell the truth of the world with a look
But I do not speak about
What I see there. Think of me then
As the certainty in your wandering nights.
I can soothe men
And will snatch you out of your doubt,
Bear you away to the stars and moon
And to sleep and dawn. So lie
And listen to my lullaby.

Verse Speaking 12 and under cont ...

Meeting Midnight

Carol Ann Duffy

I met Midnight.

Her eyes were sparkling pavements after frost.

She wore a full-length, dark-blue raincoat with a hood.

She winked. She smoked a small cheroot.

I followed her.

Her walk was more a shuffle, more a dance.

She took the path to the river, down she went.

On Midnight's scent,

I heard the twelve cool syllables, her name,

Chime from the town.

When those bells stopped,

Midnight paused by the water's edge.

She waited there.

I saw a girl in purple on the bridge.

It was One o'clock.

Hurry, Midnight said. *It's late, it's late.*

I saw them run together.

Midnight wept.

They kissed full on the lips

And then I slept.

The next day I bumped into Half-Past Four.

He was a bore.

Verse Speaking 14 and under

The Caged Bird in Springtime

James Kirkup

What can it be,
This curious anxiety?
It is as if I wanted
To fly away from here.

But how absurd!
I have never flown in my life,
And I do not know
What flying means, though I may have heard,
Of course, something about it.

Why do I peck the wires of this little cage?
It is the only nest I have ever known.
But I want to build my own.
High in the secret branches of the air.

I cannot quite remember how
It is done, but I know
That what I want to do
Cannot be done here.

I have all I need –
Seed and water, air and light,
Why, then, do I weep in anguish.
And beat my head and my wings
Against these sharp wires, while the children
Smile at each other, saying: “Hark, how he sings”?

Verse Speaking 14 and under cont ...

Button Box

Leonard Clark

An evening of wind and rain,
I found it on a shelf,
The button box, so full
Its lid would barely stay closed,
And opened it. Buttons.
Took them out one by one, all different
Shapes, sizes, colours, dull, thin;
Bone sometimes, and metal,
Holes, and none, some chipped,
A few leather, one had head of fox,
Another would do for dwarf's shield;
A dozen mother-of-pearl sand of the sea.
A set of silver ones
Might have been sixpences dancing,
A jet-black handful
Went to grandfather's funeral, two
Only from mother's wedding dress,
Tiny, pink as rosebuds.
I turned them over and over, those buttons,
Our family there, laid out in rows,
Dotting the table, reflections in the lamplight,
Then put them back, boy, girl,
Man, woman, warm from my fingers,
Into their cramped box,
Counted raindrops.

Choral Speaking 9 years and under

Conjuror

Clive Sansom

He takes an empty hat –

Like that –

Raps it . . . taps it . . .

And out pops a rabbit in a large pink bow!

How does he do it?

How *does* he do it?

How does he *do* it?

I would like to know.

He takes an old stick –

Just a trick –

Raps it . . . taps it . . .

And there's a string of coloured flags all in a row!

How does he do it?

How *does* he do it?

How does he *do* it?

I would like to know.

He takes a small book –

Now look!

Raps it . . . taps it . . .

Changes it to turtle-doves and lets them all go!

How does he do it?

How *does* he do it?

How does he *do* it?

I would like to know.

Choral Speaking 12 years and under

The Telephone Exchange

Jacqueline Emery

Clickety, clack, buzz...buzz...ping.
Clatter and clamour, ring after rrrrrring!
Lines to Liverpool, lines to Kew.
Business and personal, 'Can I help you?'
Calls of love, calls of war,
Inter-continental, and the woman next door!
Alarm for the ambulance, cries for police,
'The old barn's burning'. 'How's your niece?'
Welcome coffee, 'What a super gift.'
On and on till the evening shift.

Clickety, clack, buzz...buzz...ping.
Clatter and clamour, ring after rrrrrring!
Suicides, lovers, the mother-in-law.
Lines getting crossed and the cat's broken paw!
From palace to prison from cottage to hall
'The doctor is wanted, Emergency call.'
Births deaths and marriages time and again,
Chirpy young housewives discussing weight gain!
Sometimes we listen, we shouldn't – that's clear
But life can be spiced by the gossip we hear!