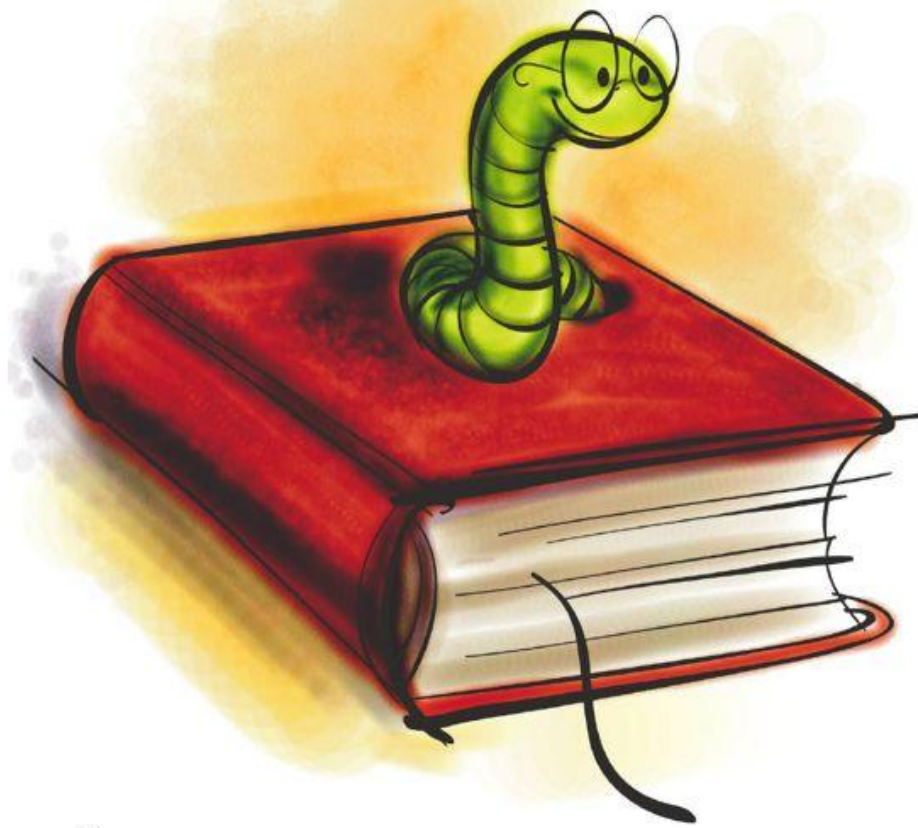


ISSUE 1

SPRING 2010



*A collection of new  
writing produced by  
people you know!*



**“The Sun Rising”** by Jordan McLaren F6

I woke, and through the blinds  
Your burning face  
Bothered mine, and with autumn-orange, eye-red,  
Filled the sheets: an unwelcome bedfellow.  
Oh, go away; leave me alone.  
I was happy before you rose.  
I'd been having a dream that you were set;  
we'd invited your sister, Selene,  
To dance with us—she's welcome anytime;  
She dances well, and she's not such a snob.

Then you had to rise, spoilsport,  
You honest bore,  
And banish all my guests to foreign lands,  
Invisibly far, beyond every sea,  
Where he and moon dwell not with me,  
On their own, too, but they by choice -  
Or by nature, at least; they follow  
their inclination wherever they please.  
I'm just in orbit, just hurtling around  
your bloated, gaudy form—damn tyrant, you!

I suppose I'm stuck with you now;  
Mind; just for now.  
I'll get rid of you, eventually.  
I'll live, with as little care as you,  
And wait you out, the battle will be  
Over by six, maybe by seven  
And victory will be all mine tonight,  
to share as I please with my evening guests.  
I'll pull my covers over my laurelled head  
and, worn out, enjoy my hard-won triumph.

**“Shoes”** by Ben Mowle F5

The day started unlike any other, a sticky heat and a sickly rush of warm meat and sweat. The boy woke, yet tried to ignore the senses rushing back to him one by one, and sleep again on the harsh metal floor. He could hear and feel the tyres flicking pebbles and debris up into the undercarriage of the van. A pale and dusty light shone through the gap in the door, just making visible the mess surrounding him. To be on his own in the small space would have seemed intimidating, but he had grown used to the small space over the last couple of days. He had only left it twice, for a wash and a basic meal, yet he

knew he was lucky to have the opportunity to be a passenger.

He had left his home, where only a future of poverty and hardship waited for him, and through his father's savings over many years was crossing the border in this beat up lump of iron, barely distinguishable as a piece of modern transport. His plan was to find somewhere to shack up, and get some kind of menial job, to integrate himself with a place which undoubtedly would be a shock to the system.

Another few drowsy hours went by, a panicked anticipation of the new city growing stronger by the minute. Eventually, the rattling of the pebbles grew to the gentle rumble of tarmac, the new life coming ever closer. The stench of the cabin in such intense heat was slowly becoming more intense, its history of smuggling people and livestock across the border revealing itself.

He began to hear people outside; the muffled shouts of so many voices seemed extraordinary. Having lived in a village of no more than thirty people, the only noise like this he had ever heard were those of the cattle on the hills. More new, unrecognisable sounds penetrated the musty box, nauseatingly reverberating around. The sounds died out again after a short while, replaced now by the hum of many engines, and loud factories. The motor stopped, and he heard the door slam. He eagerly awaited what he would see when the doors open. Anything could happen, his dreams could come true, and all of the possibility was outside the doors. He felt scared yet confident, still at the mercy of the driver. The man in the front had been paid all his money, yet the young boy had never heard back from someone who had been smuggled across the border. Anxiety crept up his back and through his hair, its cold grip making him dizzy. Suddenly, there was a burst of light as the doors were flung open. His eyes burned and he recoiled back, twisting like a wounded animal.

“Get out. We’re not done with you.”

The driver grabbed him and forced him out, trembling. He was scared and felt disorientation like never before. The sky was greyish orange, a smog filled it, blocking some of the full sun’s rays from reaching them. They were outside a large, corrugated warehouse. Its red paint was flaking away in large patches and it looked like it had seen better days.

The buildings close by were in no better state, it was a run down block of storage buildings, each one looking nicer in comparison to the next. This was not a nice place to be. The shimmering haze coming off the tops of the buildings gave clue to the hives of activity underneath them, most likely illegal, hidden away from the watchful eyes of the government.

He was walked into the giant metal box by a rough looking welcome party. Two large, imposing characters pushed him forward, not physically, but their sheer presence made him want to walk. Hundreds of adults and children emerging from the light the further he moved in. Long strip lamps lit the ceiling high up, dimly illuminating the grey

faces of the workers. The hum of mechanised needles and blades engulfed the room, making his head swim. There were so many people here, slaving away yet obviously for little gain. He guessed they must have been forced to work after sneaking into the country, and slowly came to, realising the same was about to become of him.

A child ran from a table in tears, no older than six or seven, making a break for freedom towards the long, loosely chained door he had entered through. One of the men blocked her path, cruelly slamming her to the rough floor. He threw her up onto her feet and shouted. No-one seemed to notice, concentrating on their work, or maybe too scared to look up and see what was happening. There were a dozen or so men sitting around the walls, smoking and shouting abuse at more of the workers. They were shabbily dressed and seemed to have little purpose other than to insult the immigrants.

He wanted to get out from this prison as quickly as possible, and impulsively turned and bolted towards the door. A bolt of fear tightened in his stomach when immediately the behemoth figure behind him bellowed, and took chase. He was closing in on the door and ducked under the chain, a sense of freedom pouring over him like a bucket of warm water. He kept running, looking back to see if he was getting away. Suddenly, his foot caught in a rut, kicking up dust and clay from the yellow ground. His ankle twisted, sending him sprawling to the ground, arms outstretched. He scraped along the ground, agonisingly tearing his hands and legs.

He lay; for a second everything seemed silent, the sense of calm quickly replaced by a burning stinging sensation all over. He was violently hoisted up, then beaten down again with the butt of a revolver, and roughly pulled back into the warehouse by his neck. He was taken to a long line of young men tirelessly working, forced to cut length after length of leather and fabric to be sewn laboriously into footwear. He sat dazed. Then, picking up the tools, began to work, giving in to the will of the stronger party, reduced to spending each slow minute of day after endless day making shoes for people who he would never see.



## Spring

Spring sprang,  
loosening Winter's grip  
Secretly striking at the frozen, icy barriers,  
Cutting off their tips.

Spring skipped,  
Unfreezing every snowflakes hold,  
For the sun is shining now,  
And no place is cold.

Spring danced,  
Through a maze of colourful mist,  
Blues to oranges, reds to yellows,  
Yes, that last one was a twist.

Spring sang,  
Through her soft warm lips,  
Her voice gently sweeping the forest floor,  
Making the tulips do flips.

Spring hushed,  
For her time was almost up  
Summer was approaching fast  
And she didn't have much luck.

So for the last time,  
she stood up,  
Took one last glance through golden eyes  
Spring ran.



by Kirsty Stout, F3



## Summer



Summer woke  
Just as Spring went to sleep  
She bounded over rivers  
Dipped in the water  
And skipped past

Summer soared  
In the clear blue sky  
Catching the clouds and hiding them away  
She lay in the sun  
And licked an ice cream

Summer swam  
In the blue glittery sea  
She came out of the water  
an across the golden beach  
With sand between her toes



By Abi Inglis, F3



## Winter

*Winter wailed  
through the cold and the dark  
Among the empty branches  
it screamed its pain*

*Winter whispered  
through the deserted trees,  
Shuffled through the snow  
Looking out for another*

*Winter wandered  
among the whiteness,  
Hanging up the icicles  
In the hushed darkness*

By Katie Guest, F3



## Autumn



**Autumn whirled,  
Through the bustling trees  
Freeing the leaves from their  
Oakly seize**

**Autumn erupted,  
With a fiery red  
Then softly lay  
On its leafy bed**

**Autumn gathered,  
His golden brown leaves  
In a whipping orange and red sea  
But as the it dawned another day  
Winter was creeping in again**

**Autumn charged,  
With one final rush  
Purging the trees of all their lush  
Every tree stood bare with fear  
But autumn was dead for another year**

By Callum Rennet, F3



## How to Memorise the Mr Men by Siobhan Chien

Have you ever found yourself avoiding someone on the street for being too “weird”? Have you ever completely ignored someone because they made you feel uneasy? Or have you ever mocked someone for being different?

My brother is autistic. I see it all the time.

Sometimes it's in a sneaky sideways glance, or an ignorant snigger, or a complete dismissal of him altogether. It penetrates this disguise of “open-mindedness” and “equal rights for all” that we all like to *think* that we possess. Perhaps it's a comfort, reassurance or even an excuse to think that we as a society embrace integration rather than segregation, equality rather than superiority. We frown on prejudice, reprimand racism and berate homophobia.

Yet sometimes these discreet, subtle motions unmask the true ugliness of reality. It is guarded, controlled and instantaneous, but it is there. A flash of shock, confusion, embarrassment, disgust... It may be unbelievably unfair, yet it is an almost instinctive reaction and the majority of society is guilty of this response.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which, as yet, cannot be cured but can be aided with the provision of appropriate help and support. Currently, experts are unsure of the exact cause but the diagnosis of autism is now based on three main difficulties that individuals usually encounter regarding social communication, interaction and imagination – these are also known as the “triad of impairments”. Although all of those with autism struggle with these difficulties, its effect on an individual can vary from mild to severe, meaning that those with autism can be affected in many different ways. For those with autism, the prospects are grim. It is thought that approximately 70% of people on the autistic spectrum encounter learning disabilities (excluding those with Asperger's Syndrome) and only 15% of people on the spectrum are in full-time paid employment. The difficulty in recognising autistic symptoms leads to a lack of understanding within the general public, which then suppresses the opportunities available to those on the spectrum, thus making it difficult for them to find their place in society. They may be startling and shocking, but these are the facts. With over 500,000 people on the autistic spectrum in Britain alone, how can we possibly continue this discrimination whilst maintaining that we support “equality for all”? It simply is not feasible.

Whilst researching autism for an RE project several years ago, I was stunned to discover that there was only one book in the entire school library with any reference to autism at all. And this is a library that is described as being “up-to-date” with “over 16,000 resources” according to the school itself. Even this single book was so patronisingly simple that it barely warranted its place in my bibliography.

“Thomas goes to a special school.” Well, yes, I would think so.

“Thomas has trouble making friends.” Yes, I could have told you that too.

“Thomas does not like loud noises.” Really?

What was the point? After thirteen years of having an autistic brother, this clearly was not an astounding discovery. No wonder so few people understand autism.

When I was younger, I knew there was something different about my brother, although I wasn't entirely sure what or why this was. I could hear the adults talking, but I often confused “artistic” with “autistic” and still had no clear understanding of why my brother sometimes acted differently to me or had to go to a different school. In fact, I didn't even know that my brother has autism rather than Asperger's Syndrome or that he is actually registered as disabled until very recently. My mum seems to think this is a good thing. Apparently it shows that I “don't see him as autistic” but I “see him as my brother”, which I thought was a pretty bad explanation. He *is* my brother. I see no point in denial. He is who he is and, unfortunately, my brother is autistic. I've never known anything different, and I never will. To me, he is smart, funny, caring, honest and hugely annoying, yet remarkable and fascinating.

When talking about autism, people tend to focus on the negatives. “It's difficult to see so it's difficult to treat, their social skills are limited so they'll never fit in properly, and what about the learning difficulties?” Really, *what* about them? Who cares? There are approximately six million people in the UK who suffer from dyslexia. They have learning difficulties too, but that doesn't mean that their whole future is compromised as they are doomed to an empty, unfulfilling life.

Clearly, life with autism is not a bed of roses. Like the majority of those on the autistic spectrum, my brother endures a constant struggle with social skills and the interaction and communication with others. He is totally unable to express his needs, thoughts, fears and emotions so cannot ask for help or guidance, which means that we must search for clues in his behaviour to understand how he feels and what he wants. Not an easy skill, yet a small handful of people have mastered this unspoken language of interpreting his actions and body language. When he becomes overwhelmed by his surroundings, he suffers panic attacks, or he barricades himself in his bedroom if there are too many people in the house. If he's really distressed, he shouts to “Call the police!” in an attempt to stop whatever is hurting him.

This inability to communicate works both ways. He doesn't understand when you are upset or angry, he doesn't appreciate that sometimes it's inappropriate to laugh at people and he can't read people's expressions or tone of voice. He doesn't understand that you are bored because he's talking at you instead of to you and he is unable to comprehend sarcasm, a major component of the teenage language. As a result, communication is clearly difficult and misunderstanding is hard to avoid. This often influences his ability to make friends, especially those of his own age, simply because he doesn't know how to go about it, thus making it difficult for him to fit into his surroundings.

In addition, like most autistic individuals, my brother also suffers from extreme sensory problems. Usually those on the

spectrum find that they are either under-sensitive or their senses have been highly intensified. My brother falls into the latter category. Loud noises hurt his ears, so it's not uncommon to see him sprinting out of a shop if there's a Hoover in sight or running from the toilets because someone's turned the hand drier on. He also dislikes some smells and refuses to be around them. For years, my brother would sit in the car when we visited our granny's house because it was "too small and smelt like old ladies". He did have a point - the stench of perfume can be somewhat overpowering - but none of us would ever be brave enough to say that to her (and survive). Also, he is very reluctant to try new foods as he can be fussy about the texture, temperature and colour of what he eats. Considering that my brother and I are half Chinese, the fact that he doesn't like rice undoubtedly offends our Asian relatives and it is with a great deal of reluctance that they agree to order him a hamburger with chips and a strawberry milkshake from good old McDonald's whenever we travel half way across the world to visit them. When he was younger, he refused to hold crayons or pencils because he didn't like the feel of them, and for months he slept curled up in a duvet cocoon on the floor because he liked the feel of the carpet. Sometimes it becomes hard to justify his "odd" behaviour to others and this causes many problems, as how can we possibly predict exactly when we might meet a stray Hoover whilst out for the afternoon?

He also struggles to understand the concept of what being good means or exactly how he should behave in order to be good. This also extends to his inability to follow rules, particularly in sport as he doesn't understand the concept of team games. Similarly, when he does recognise that someone has done wrong and has broken the rules, he says they need to go to prison, no matter how trivial their crime may be. This is part of the autistic mechanism of literal thinking. Apparently I should be in jail for eating his chips, looking at his iPod, lying in his bed, ruffling his hair... Very serious offences, of course, yet I'm pretty sure I'm not guilty, thanks to my general reputation as a good, law-abiding citizen.

Literal thinking often causes a great deal of confusion in our house, although it also brings many laughs. Recently, my brother fell out with a classmate and their constant bickering began to bug his teacher. "Just... Don't talk to her!" she eventually told him, which caused disastrous consequences. The days that followed were tense, awkward and silent. Quite literally, as my brother didn't say a word to her, until his teacher eventually explained the misunderstanding and he realised that he didn't *actually* need to become a mute whilst at school. Similarly, he became quite concerned when I told him my friend had broken her nose, leading him to ask exactly where she'd put it after she had broken it. The idea that it might still be attached to her face seemed almost as ridiculous to him as the idea of removing her nose altogether seemed to me. Thus, as we clearly see things from a different perspective, it becomes difficult for those of us not on the autistic spectrum to communicate with those who are, which makes it difficult for them to fit into society.

Although there are many factors which hinder an autistic individual's ability to be understood by others, it is easy to

forget that there are many wonderful qualities that those on the spectrum possess, which often result in greatness and make them who they truly are.

Did you know that it has been recognized that some of the most talented individuals in modern history have displayed certain autistic mannerisms and characteristics? Sir Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, W.A. Mozart, George Orwell, Vincent van Gogh, Bill Gates... The list goes on. Autism deserves to be recognised as a producer of great new ideas and developments as many talented individuals have made highly valuable contributions to certain professional fields. A key symptom of autism is fixation with a particular subject and, due to the phenomenal memory that autistic individuals are lucky enough to possess, they can learn a stunning amount of information about their particular fascination. However, it is very common for autistic individuals to talk constantly about their "specialist subject" in great depth without realising that, actually, most people aren't remotely interested in this topic and are, in fact, bored.

We have spent years in Pokémon world, we have holidayed with Mr Bean, we were practically on first name terms with all the Mr Men and we could answer every single question on the Who Wants to be a Millionaire Family Picture Edition DVD. A fascination with keys led to a trip to Ninewells Hospital (when my brother tried to digest the key to my granny's window), a quest to find the hidden key to a friend's (very expensive, one-of-a-kind) drinks cabinet and an extremely displeased teacher when she found herself locked in a supply cupboard. My brother could name all 493 Pokémon and identify each of them purely by the sound they make. Now, if you ask me, that's quite a skill. Okay, so perhaps identifying Pokémon may seem somewhat obscure, but apply this to a relevant subject and you're pretty much a genius.

Right now, his obsession is music. He knows every song written and performed by Billy Joel, The Beatles, Michael Jackson and the Kings of Leon, has a fantastically good sense of rhythm and, within the space of a year, has managed to turn his hand to piano, electric guitar and bass guitar with hopes of learning to play the saxophone and drum kit and his teachers saying that his guitar playing is already at Standard Grade level. This scares me a little. Having played the clarinet for eight years myself, I like music too. Yet I am undoubtedly nowhere near as naturally talented, creative or versatile as my brother is. Jealous? Me? Absolutely.

My brother clearly found all of these obsessions fascinating and relaxing, so surely they can only be encouraged. Usually, the "specialist subject" of an autistic individual changes over time yet, if used in the right way, it should be viewed as a way to enhance the person's learning and understanding of the world. These obsessions can influence huge benefits to the individual and encourage them to become more interactive and involved with others by expanding their interest in the subject and, although my brother has not quite grasped the idea that he cannot actually "be a rock band", he is clearly becoming increasingly active within his class by sharing and interacting through music.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that those on the autistic spectrum are fantastically honest. Okay, so perhaps this isn't so wonderful when your brother replies that, actually, you do

look “fat and ugly” in that dress or he announces that a shop is “too smelly” in front of the owner before storming out with a look of mild disgust etched on his face. Yes, that has happened and yes, it was horrifically embarrassing. But aren't people always whinging on at us to “be honest” and “tell the truth” all the time? And those on the autistic spectrum do this instinctively without even needing to be told. We all thought that my brother was getting a bit overexcited when he told us he'd seen Stuart Little on holiday, when there were in fact mice in the apartment. Actually, he was simply being honest and trying to tell us something pretty important in his own somewhat distorted way. Although sometimes a little autistic translation may be required, the brutal honesty of those on the spectrum is undeniably admirable and deserves to be credited as a valuable, endearing quality that many of us would be lucky to possess.

Additionally, many autistic individuals are meticulous in their attention to detail and love of routine, meaning that they can be extremely well organised and this idea of structure can be worked into learning and dealing with everyday situations. For the last nine years, my brother has had a fantastically strong hatred of school. The idea of leaving home and his computer, Pokémon, Playstation, guitar or whatever his current obsession may be for a whole day of work seems preposterous to him, yet with the introduction of an established routine, he is able to be carted out the door each day and into the classroom. Every day before school we get a rousing rendition of Billy Joel's “Uptown Girl” or “We Didn't Start the Fire” (depending on his mood) at precisely 7:45 each morning and, similarly, at night he has to play his piano at 10:30 before he goes to sleep. We used to take longer routes home from school each day because my brother liked to see the trees on a particular road and if my mum ever forgot... Well, that was simply disgraceful. We would have to turn back around again and drive past the infamous trees just to keep my brother happy, even if they didn't look remotely different from when we passed them the day before.

When we respect an autistic individual's love of routine, it avoids distress and keeps them happy and can be used to help them flourish and thrive in an environment that they are used to. Above all, it helps strengthen our understanding of the individual as we are aware of their likes and dislikes, and can be used to develop the individual's trust and respect of others, helping them to establish more relationships with other people.

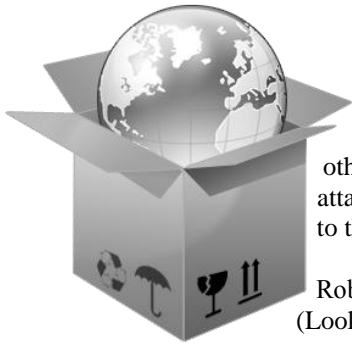
Finally, it must be said that helping, teaching and watching autistic individuals learn new skills is undoubtedly rewarding and fulfilling and sparks indescribable feelings of pride and gratification. No other experience can be compared to this, as

the appreciation of the individual is clear and huge progress is often made with a dash of patience and encouragement. When he was younger, my brother used to pull clothes from drawers, tear out thousands of tissues and hurtle books from shelves. My mum used to say there was “nothing constructive” about him, “only destructive”! He was a hurricane of mischief, charging down the corridors at school, pulling pupils' work from walls as he went. When he left primary school, his teachers' pride was undeniable and unanimous – he was a changed boy. Now, as much as it pains me to admit, he is polite, gentle, mature and well-behaved, all thanks to the wonderful assistance of his teachers.

Similarly, when he first became interested in music, I was feeling unusually nice (and a little bored) so I decided to teach him how to read music, this being a skill that took me the best part of two years to learn just the basics, and one that I am still learning eight years later. So we sat down together one night, armed with a keyboard, stacks of old music books, a pile of crumpled manuscript paper and a clutch of rainbow coloured pencils, and I began to impart my knowledge and big-sisterly wisdom. Much to my horror, my brother was naming and identifying a huge range of notes within two *hours*. Despite my dismay that he could do something quite difficult virtually instantaneously *and* he could do it better than me, I was secretly thrilled. I was so proud of him, and positively buzzing with happiness that we had actually worked together to achieve something that would prove to be valuable and worthwhile. Thus, working with those on the autistic spectrum is remarkably rewarding and such an accomplishment, and shows the warmth, enthusiasm and eagerness to learn new things of many autistic individuals. If we are willing to work together, I know that we can inspire greatness and rouse the true potential in so many people who may have otherwise been forgotten or have lost valuable opportunities, due to an unfair stereotype and the reluctance of many people to invest the time and patience in these individuals.

Maybe those on the autistic spectrum will never fully fit into society. There are a large number of obstacles to overcome and many barriers will have to be quashed in the process. There is no doubt in the matter – having an autistic child in the family is hard. It's tough and it's sad and it's heartbreaking, but there are huge rewards. Pride, joy and achievement can overrule the negatives. Sometimes he may act inappropriately or struggle socially, but my brother is proof that with a little help and support, many of those on the autistic spectrum are truly inspirational individuals.





## Planet Earth: Who Will Buy? By Findlay Young F2

(The scene settles over a large, futuristic indoors area with several alien beings, robots and other sci-fi creatures bustling around a group of chairs, trying to find a seat. An electrical banner attached to the roof of the building says “Alpha Centurai Auction House”.)

Robot Auctioneer #1: “Settle down please, settle down.”  
(Looks down at some data pads.)

Auctioneer #1: “Bidding shall begin for this magnificent planet.”  
(Without looking up he presses a button, making a large holographic image of the Earth appear.)

Auctioneer #1: “Entitled: Earth. This fine piece of work is fairly new and easily convertible into anything that is wanted. It has great natural beauty and a variety therein. Comes with running water, heating, plenty of natural light. Any building work does not require planning permission. It makes a great starter home for a young race. It also has large deposits of minerals and its real crowning glory is a small race of about 6 billion “humans”. These are also easily convertible, can be used as miners, farmers, slaves or servants. Bids over 200 000 Galactic Credits, please.”

(A large, fat, feminine alien adorned yellow coat with a small furry animal around her neck bids, as do several others.)

Auctioneer #1 (with increasing speed): 200,210,220,230,240 Anyfurtherbids? Oh, 250, 260,270, 280, 290, 300, 310, Threetw-(with sparks flying from him) twtwtwtwtwtwtwtwtw-“.

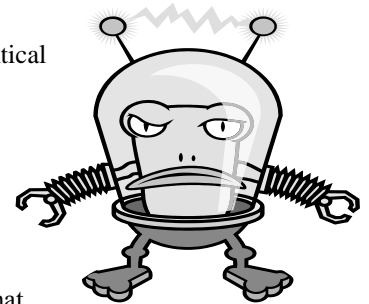
(Auctioneer explodes and falls to the ground with a crash, all the while burning.)

A large, robotic arm picks up the Auctioneer and drags him off. Another robotic arm sets an identical robot auctioneer behind the pedestal.)

Auctioneer #2: “I apologise for my colleague’s outburst. I believe that bidding reached 320 000 Galactic Credits. Are there any further bids? Going once, going twice....SOLD! To Mr.....”

“P’tarcth the Destroyer!!!”.

Auctioneer #2: “Lot number 287, the planet “Earth” is sold to Mr.P’tarcth the Destroyer”. And that, ladies and gentlemen, brings today’s auction to a close.”



## How many Planets are in the sky? by Laura Johnston F2

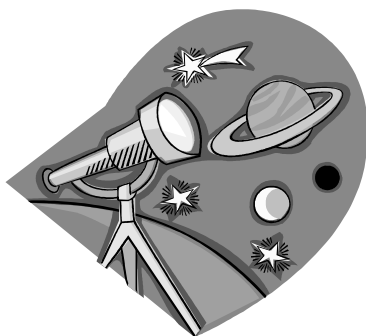
My mum told me when I was young,  
There were nine planets of which we are among,  
And since then I’ve wondered and wondered,  
“Was she correct?” One day I pondered,  
I climbed mountains and looked through telescopes,  
Just to prove a few of my hopes.

“Stars?” I thought, “Are they not planets?”  
I looked through some booklets,  
Researching for hours.  
Then I found out something sour,  
Stars aren't planets, they are fire!  
My plan had gone haywire!  
Annoyed I was that there were still only nine,  
But I still searched, for what was beyond that skyline.

Next my thoughts turned to the sun,  
“Could it be a planet?” I said a bit stunned.  
Of course it couldn't, the sun was heat and light,  
So I had one source left which I worked on for a fortnight.

But no, the moon was merely a rock,  
I sat down and sighed, beginning to mock,  
It was the end of my search, how could I ever have thought,  
“My mother was right,” I said, a bit distraught.

So yes, to come to a conclusion,  
There are nine planets in these skies, not by my delusion.  
So listen to your mother as she tells you of these tales,  
Because she’s right you know, even if you don't believe her wails.



## **Death Patrol** by George Salisbury and Euan Strachan, F1

The smell of death is heavy is heavy in the air  
A lone mother and a baby hare  
The sounds of gunshots rattle my hair  
In Afghanistan we are  
Sand and stone cover the ground  
By the road is an ominous mound  
In Afghanistan so far

A machine of death flies through the sky  
If an enemy we see he shall surely die  
We fly through the sky at an almighty high  
Over Afghanistan we sail  
Up, down, round and round the metal creature  
goes  
For we are in a helicopter, shooting down our foes  
In Afghanistan we fail

In the machine there is a man  
A 23 year old good with a pan  
A tall, brown haired, muscular human  
In Afghanistan he stayed  
Out of the window he stole a glance

And saw death and destruction in a trance  
In Afghanistan he had to persuade  
On the ground he thought he saw  
A little girl being hurt by crows, caw-caw  
He carried on looking in horrified awe  
In Afghanistan she died  
The buildings he saw were crushed and frail  
And looked like they could be brought down by a  
touch of hail  
In Afghanistan they cried

Suddenly, out of the blue, a rocket came towards  
us  
Its sheer grasp of fatality streamed towards thus  
It smashed into us like a double decker bus  
In Afghanistan we fell  
We fell towards the stone like a stone in the sky  
And out of my lips came my final cry  
In Afghanistan I fell



## **Minute of Silence** by Jessie McGoff

Anna sat alone. Hair tied with a bow, hands embracing her coffee mug. The café busied itself around her; she was insignificant at her table, staring at the vacant chair opposite her. She slumped her weight down into the wooden chair. Thinking blindly on the promise of an arrival, her hope was violent and inchoate. She gazed into the flickering wasteland of the city outside, until the racing people and the angry cars carried her thoughts away from the café.

Franz threw his bag unceremoniously onto the table, collapsing into the chair with a relieved exhalation of pent-up breath. The crash of his cargo onto the small counter jolted Anna out of her daydream. Franz greeted her with a small nod, as he slid his bag to the floor. The rare grace made Anna blush and look away. She was happy to see Franz again; she couldn't deny it to herself, but she made a conscious effort to contain her smile as Franz ordered a coffee for himself. They made small, shy conversation until Franz's order arrived with a conclusive clink onto the surface of the table.

Anna knew the pair's thoughts were disjointed. She could tell when Franz was about to speak, his eyes would lift suddenly, only to freeze and slowly retire back to staring at his coffee. The mutual vacancy of their thoughts was not of disinterest, but of sheer lack of words. Neither knew of any words they could exchange. They had exchanged a thousand discussions, debates and arguments in the past. Anna glanced about the café, unnerved, longing to steal any fragments of the conversations happening around her. It was Franz who then found the courage; "If we have nothing to say to each other, we should have a minute of silence." Anna looked at him, disenchanted with the idea. "A minute is a long time, a real silence takes forever," he concluded. Anna sighed, yet unquestionably agreed to Franz's plan, "Okay, go."

The initial shock of the agreed silence amused them both, Anna grinned shyly at Franz. She thought of the ridiculous situation, yet supposed that it shouldn't be too difficult, considering the awkward quiet they had involuntarily sat through previously. She sighed, and looked up at Franz, who was watching the cars outside, listening to the greasy black engines drag their weight down the road. Anna listened to the sound of the café kitchen, the crash of plates and the voices of orders. Nothing was ever perfectly silent, she thought. The faint tick of the clock was just the bass in the orchestra of the café. The brash scraping of chair legs against the ground, the short heightening screech from the coffee machine, the rhythmic snapping of stiletto heels marching across the wooden floor. It was tribal, a hundred urban warrior cries roaring from the city.

Anna scratched the back of her head; she heard her nails drag faintly across her scalp. She heard the internal crack and muffling in her ears as she yawned. Franz shifted in his seat; Anna heard the fabric of his jacket shifting with him. She heard him click his tongue, and she saw him look straight at her. She tried not to listen to her inner voice screaming out what she refused to confirm. She heard her mind protesting his. She heard Franz's thoughts functioning; she heard a thousand quick decisions occurring in his head. She heard his realisation, his panic, and his conclusion.

Franz stood, "I have to go." He fumbled for his bag, giving one last apologetic look to Anna, he walked out of the café, leaving her sitting staggered in her chair. There was a thunder as the café door slammed, and only then did Anna finally hear it – perfect unobliterated silence.



## A selection of poems by Jenny Zhan, F2

### **Night Comes**

*As the sun set down behind the hills,  
The moon came up to take its place.  
It hang up high in the star strewn sky,  
And dimly lit up the clouds.*

### **The Undead**

*The lights go out,  
The streets are cleared,  
The wind blew gently  
Through the graves.  
The full moon shone on his tomb  
It slid open and he rose.  
His face pale white,  
His eyes blood red,  
And his fangs dripping,  
With blood.  
He stepped out of his tomb most gracefully and grinned.  
It's time, to feed again.*

### **One Winter's Morning**

*As morning dawned closer,  
As night passed away,  
As the sun rose up,  
And shone as always.  
It glistened on the frozen grass,  
And sparkled on the icy ground.  
It lit up the world  
So that all could see  
The beauty of Earth,  
As it was, and will always be.*

### **Everything**

*Morning comes and passes,  
And so does the darkest night.  
This comes true for all these things  
Like friendship, love and kindness*

## A Deadly Deed by Aneesah S Javed, F3

The afternoon winter sun shines bright in the sky lightening the busy, icy city with its long, cold rays. I look up into the blue sky and take a deep breath, closing my eyes. Birds are flying around me. I listen to them, chirping their games.

I take a small step up and look down. The building I am standing on is one of the tallest in the city. I lean against a black, cold railing which is preventing me from falling all the way down to the bottom. From here, the city looks cold and dead - like my heart.

I'm sixteen years old, and am standing on the top of my apartment building, eight stories high.

I'm sixteen years old and am black, living with my black family, in a white neighbourhood.

I'm sixteen years old with a mum, a murdered dad and a younger brother.

I'm sixteen years old and go to a public school.

I'm sixteen years old and am about to jump off this building and end my life.

I'm going to change my black colour to red, deep red, the cruel, happy colour of blood.

It's cold up here, much colder than down in the streets. I put my hands to my mouth, blow over them and rub them together to warm them up. I put my hands over the edge and let them hang in the dark emptiness of the afternoon sky. Down below, something catches my eye. People gather and watch me. I can't make them out too clearly, but I wonder if my mum and brother are amongst them, huddled together. Mum would be crying. She cries a lot these days – especially since my dad's death. We don't have words for each other – be they soothing, or full of anger – we both have an abundance of tears and anger. She dealt with the murder in her own way, and I dealt with it in the only way I knew – by lashing out at her, the world, and everyone. She still stood strong... I am a burden to her and I know she would be better off without me. I can't help her or myself. That's why I decided to do this.

I take another deep breath and exhale, trying to remember all the happy times I've had, but I can't recall them. My memories have abandoned me, like my dad. All I could see is a snake pit full of nothing. No colour, no warmth, no emotion, just a vast emptiness that has engulfed and followed me everywhere.

I climb over the rail. People are shouting! Now I am on the other side of the rail, nothing guards me from falling. I look down at where they're standing, where Mum might be standing, and grasp tightly onto the rails again. I let go of one hand. A shriek in the distance. I close my eyes and set my body free.

Why aren't I falling? Was aren't I dead already?

I open my eyes to realise that I am being held back. A white policeman and black policewoman are struggling to pull me back over the rail. Let me go, let me find peace!

"Let me go! I want to die! I don't want to live!" I yell at him. They ignore me. I rebel against their grasp, try to shove and kick them away.

"Stop it! Stop it!" the policeman shouts at me, "What are you doing? Are you daft? You think that ending your life is the easy way out don't you? Well you're wrong! I used to be just like you! But I'm still here; I made something of my life! And if you still want to be an idiot and jump off here, then go! Liza and I definitely don't want to waste our time no longer on you! Go! Go!"



I stop struggling and lie still. I look at the police officer. I look at his name tag: Richard.

"Daniel! Oh, Daniel!" Where did Mum come from? I feel ashamed, embarrassed, I feel...safe. What was I thinking?

I look at the two saviours; words failed me. My hand moves of its own accord and grasps theirs – there is no need for words as we have all shared a life long moment that none one of us would forget.

**The Girl in the Purple Dress – A Ballad**  
By Ella Hudson and Sophie Kroboth, F1

Through the forest, shortly after dawn,  
Skips along a young fawn,  
To the creek it is drawn,  
To have a drink in the early morn,  
This creature moves gracefully and without fears,  
The ground a blanket of grass and herbs,  
And above fly a flock of birds,  
The peaceful forest so silent with no words,  
This scene is disrupted when a lady appears.

Her hair is long straight and jet black,  
She treads along the muddy track,  
Picking herbs, never looking back,  
Mechanically placing them in her brown sack,  
Her lengthily purple dress sweeps the forest floor,  
Walking by the winding stream,  
Her thoughts and worries are a dream,

This life is perfect it really does seem,  
She walks back home to the large wooden door.

Suddenly she hears a clatter of hooves,  
She stops in her tracks and doesn't move,  
There are men in black, like deadly troops,  
They search for her in smaller groups,  
As a witch she will float,  
but as a human she will not,  
When she was found  
she was too shocked to weep,  
They took her to the creek,  
where the water was deep,  
It was the middle of the night  
but no one was asleep,  
They threw her in and she did float-  
she was a witch as everyone thought.

**Afternoon Troubles**

How touching it is to know,  
That soon you will be gone.  
No more smiles and sultry stares,  
Yes, soon you will be gone.

For if I had to sit and endure  
More of your devilish gaze,  
I would surely melt into  
A blushing reddish haze.

You've made me spill my tea,  
You've made me drop the butter,  
And all the while you sit and stare,  
While my family all mutter.

At every turn you grin,  
You know just what you do.  
At every sigh you chuckle,  
At which my Mum does too.

You make me weak and foolish,  
You keep me up at night,  
Every thought you eclipse  
Like the moon caresses the light.

How touching it is to know  
That soon you will be gone  
But 'til then please stop staring,  
And have another scene.



**Home Is Not Where the Heart Is**

So snicker snack went the train,  
Back to the town that I once knew,  
Taking me home, home again.

Staring through panes that are tear stained  
with rain,  
Homely comforts were far and few,  
So snicker snack went the train.

I never knew pain  
'Til the train left you,  
Taking me home, home again.

So heavy, so tired, so filled with strain -  
To you I'll return, it's true, it's true.

So snicker snack went the train.

You held my hand, my heart, in the lane  
and we waited, in shock, the train was in view,  
Taking me home, home again,  
Oh why must I leave, it drives me insane!

But for a while these feelings I must subdue.

So snicker snack went the train.  
Taking me home, home again.

