

**West Yorkshire  
Young Poet  
Laureate  
Programme**

**Anthology 2024–2025**

**National Literacy Trust**

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A huge thank you to the young poets who have shared their poems with us for this anthology.

To the educators and parents who have shown such enthusiasm and dedication.

Thank you to the professional poets who inspired the pupils' writing.

We are enormously grateful to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the National Poetry Centre whose generous support made this project possible.

## **ABOUT THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST**

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed.

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills give you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. For over 30 years the National Literacy Trust has continued to support schools, families and communities on a local and national level to help people change their stories.

Our evidence-based Young Writers programme supports schools to develop lasting writing-for-enjoyment practices with the view that every young person is a writer.

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# FOREWORD

**by Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin**

Following the success of the first West Yorkshire Poets Laureate competition last year, I was delighted to be able to re-run the programme this year. With the support of the National Literacy Trust, and in collaboration with the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, we began this year's search for our winning Young Poets. We thought last year's winners, Isabelle and Alina were amazing, but the talent keeps on coming!

Before I entered the world of politics, I spent 30 years working in the creative industries as an actor and a writer. During this time, I witnessed the powerful impact that creativity can have – being able expressing yourself and tell your story, but I also learnt that it was possible to make a living from doing something you love. This is why I am committed to ensuring access to creative industries and the arts for all children and young people, supporting them to find their voice and confidence through incredible initiatives like the West Yorkshire Young Poets Laureate programme.

Running alongside West Yorkshire Poetry Week, the Young Poets Laureate competition engaged with over 6,000 young people in writing activities and in-person visits from professional poets. Hundreds of schools took part in the competition, and the National Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage and I knew we would have a tough task trying to whittle down the talented entries.

After careful consideration, Simon and I selected Max in Year 5



from Wakefield, as the winner of the primary-school aged category – with his heart-warmingly funny poem *Seven Things Found in my Mum's Amazon Delivery*.

In the secondary-school aged category, Ayesha from Year 9 from Calderdale was the winner, with her powerful poem *PrimaDonna*. The previous young poets raised the bar with commissioned poems like '*What it means to be Northern*', and we can't wait to see the same from Ayesha and Max on events coming up throughout this year.

As this year's West Yorkshire Young Poets, they will receive support and mentoring from professional poets and be commissioned to write and perform poetry at key events happening across West Yorkshire. Our Young Poets Laureate will be brilliant ambassadors for West Yorkshire for 2025 and beyond – and I personally can't wait to see and hear more from them!

## **YEAR 4 CATEGORY**

Max Withe

# **Seven Things Found In My Mum's Amazon Delivery**

Beware, my Mum will not like you to hear this!

A flannel, to clean my horridly dirty knee

A plastic bag, to control the stench of my dad's smelly running socks

Another cardigan, with no use except for the cats to sleep on

A humongous leather handbag, to bash people with

A Leeds Knights jersey, for my birthday

And some flowers, for the DPD guy...

Isaac Chia

## The Wonders of Winter

The street is silent, the air is cold,  
Listen to the whistling sound,  
It is the wind blowing gently on the  
bare oak trees.  
The snowflakes are drifting slowly,  
painting the floor white.

Cloudy day, frosty night.  
Shh...be quiet! Don't wake the sleepy ones.  
The animals are hibernating in their cosy home, storing energy until  
the spring comes.

Fire crackles, children laughing,  
Family gathering close.  
Look at the magnificent tree,  
Presents piled high, it must be the season of giving.

Party is here, tables are laid,  
Turkey, puddings and pigs in the blanket,  
Filling everyone's tummy in delight.  
Oh how I love Christmas,  
I wish this wonderful time will never end.

Aizah Khan

## **A Fox's Dream Job**

The fox goes out to hunt,  
He eventually starts to grunt,  
The fox finds his prey,  
Then he starts to say,  
I love my job going to rob.  
The next thing he does is go to bed,  
In the morning he calls his friend ned,  
Sharpen your claws he said.



Alex Hall

## Morning Rush

Wakey, wakey open the blinds

Wash your face splash, splash, splash

Down the stairs

Fill my tum, tum, tum

To the bathroom brush, brush, brush

On my ipad play, play, play

To the kitchen pick up my bag

Rush out the door late, late, late.

Varyan Nazim

# Break Down

Break down with a frown

Turn it upside down

“Time for a snack?”

“NO!”

Break down, look around

No frown? “Good!”

Fall down

Right to the ground

Look again, no friend?

Haha run!

Just for fun!

Haha run!

Just for fun!

Break down with a frown

Turn it upside down

Look again, no friend!

It's

The

End.

Oriana Zielinska

# Gravity

The gravity is gone and the Earth is alone,  
People cry from the speed  
When the coral reef can finally breathe.  
What if it's just one big dream?  
It's a silence in the air,  
There is nothing,  
except...  
Us.  
Silence, silence, silence.

## **YEAR 9 CATEGORY**

Ayeshah Wardak



# Primadonna

Forward do we stand  
Your ancient eyes unwavering.  
You, dear lover, comb the white waves of the sea  
Your voice sweetly singing

And yet, do I dare suppress the universe?

Oh, all the sea girls, ladies of the ocean  
Primadonnas who sing cries of devotion  
May you ever sing to he?

I have turned my suffering into a neat little design  
But it is impossible to understand what I am.  
Would it have been worthwhile to have strongly rolled up my sleeves  
And whisper with a trembling heart, "Yes, this is where I stand!"

You, dear lover, know nothing about my dreams  
My aching to burn bright.  
We have lingered far too long in the sea  
You are wreathed in seaweed of light.

The universe parts you and I  
It blackens my heart with brown.  
I can only tell you for the last time  
In human voices, we drown

Nisha Ruddock

## What Will They Think?

What will they think?  
My confidence starts to shrink.  
Hundreds of eyes will be on you.  
You're next in the queue.

And then I'm out there  
Their judgement obvious within their stare.  
The music starts to play.  
Now's the moment you've been dreading for days.

My mouth begins to open.  
And I feel like I'm frozen.  
Words escape my soul.  
My thoughts drifting into a blackhole.

'LOUDER!' someone shouts  
I'm overwhelmed with doubts.  
Their disregards fill the room with laughter.  
My voice is like a rollercoaster.

Soon enough it's over  
And I feel like such a joker.  
A soulless applause, free of glee.  
So, what do they really think of me?

Zeeshan Ali

# Expectations

I may not have an interesting story,  
Cuz my parents went ahead and made one for me,  
Yet this new form of torture is pretty profound,  
I mean ur orders are more confusing than pronouns.

How do u expect us underdeveloped children to be at best at  
somet?

How do u expect us undermined, undefined to reach the top of  
the summit?

How do u expect us to do something ur not even good at?  
It's like seeing a road and pointing the directions to a mole rat.

Coming back from school feelin' stressed,  
Parents pushed me to always ace my tests,  
No glee in sight hearts racin', palpatatin',  
If they find out bout my tests I'll be in military trainin'.

Don't have to be the best don't have to be a doctor,  
Never really thought of that I have always sought to,  
Maybe do computin' or be a professional boxer,  
But my mind will be warped like wood cuz that's not was I was  
taught but,  
No, have to put hearts back and mourn,  
Get PTSD from patients dying that I saw.

How do u expect us underdeveloped children to be at best at  
somet?

How do u expect us undermined, undefined to reach the top of the summit?

How do u expect us to do something ur not even good at?

It's like seeing a road and pointing the directions to a mole rat.

Natalia Kasznia

# Media Control

Brainwashed, dehumanised, misled,  
Leaving you hanging on by a thread.  
Well, you're not pretty, so what did you expect?  
Other than getting analysed from every aspect,  
Dissected apart like a subject,  
Made to be a misfit; misheard, misread,  
Many words better left unsaid instead.

Step on the scale,  
Watch the number rise.  
Look in the mirror,  
The familiar face you don't recognise.  
Hide behind that disguise you despise,  
Tell yourself those lies and criticise,  
The body you wish you could construct, configure and customise,  
When will you realise?



Harry Simpson

## The Song Bird's Lament

Under the hillside,  
At the base of the cliffs,  
Perches a songbird,  
A guest of the skiffs.

Longing its life,  
To run wild and roam free,  
Soaring the sky,  
Skirting the sea.

As it gazes down,  
Far away from the cliff,  
The fear of falling,  
Renders it stiff.

So it trills and whistles,  
It quavers and sings,  
It wails its sad song,  
The truth of it stings.

It clutches at rocks,  
Gazing away,  
Hoping, no, longing,  
To fly off someday.

For at the end of the day,  
That's our true desire,  
To sever our strings,  
And flee from the fire.

So learn from that songbird,  
Follow your call,  
Remember each stand,  
Begins with a fall.

For trying and failing,  
Is failing, it's true,  
But not trying at all,  
Shows more about you.

Chuckwufunanya Maya

## Let Me Feel

I have forgotten love  
Forgotten compassion  
I'm not sure of what I have,  
But I know a lot  
About the things I have lost.  
Let me feel again  
Let me lament  
Let tears descend from my eyes  
My anger I need to vent.  
I truly hold a desire  
For this emotionless feeling to end  
I've locked up my heart  
Pushing away people that care  
Because past traumatic relations and experiences  
Inflicted me with fear.  
Let me get angry  
Allow me to fight  
Allow my thoughts to be reverted to actions  
Let my sadness be visible in sight  
I'm begging my heart to open up  
I want it to have feeling  
But it remains closed.  
It may need some healing.

Oliver Hirst

## Solitude Within Society

Everywhere I look I see solitude  
I used to think everyone was happy and peaceful  
But now I see  
Not everyone understands  
Their mental health, which is what is wrong  
With today's society  
People are forced  
To be condemned into solitude because of the  
Weight of all the built-up stress in  
The younger generation  
Into more of an  
Anxious and troubled youth  
Which emphasises into the  
Next generation and  
So forth

Have you ever wondered  
Why the universe is so overwhelming yet  
So subtle, resembling a steady  
Heartbeat  
Every time I close my eyes  
I see an open sky  
Above  
The uncharted waters of my mind  
This is how the world makes us  
Feel...  
We are not just numbers  
Nor robots  
We are people  
We should be treated the s

Emma-Rose Manera



## **Chains of Daises**

Your gentle fingers climbed the stems of the daises  
Entwining them together like a sweet summer spell,  
We laid together under the blanket of the sun  
Giggling and chatting bubbly.

Under the haze of the heat  
Your smile brought me back to reality,  
You carefully cut the stem  
A never ending chain of memory.

All good things must come to an end  
Although you never really left,  
I'll always revisit to see your face  
Even if I'm never, worthy of your grace.

Aaron Singh

# Silent Struggles

In a world where shadows creep,  
A soul fights hard, refuses sleep,  
With every breath, a silent plea,  
To find the light, to simply be.

A smile worn like fragile glass,  
A façade for those who pass,  
In eyes, the storm of battles fought,  
A struggle that they speak of not.

Around them, whispers, eyes avert,  
Unseen wounds that deeply hurt,  
A loneliness in crowds they feel,  
An aching void they cannot heal.

Each day a climb, a mountain steep,  
They fight to rise, they fight to keep,  
A shred of joy, a spark of grace,  
Amidst the trials they must face.

But silence echoes, cold and stark,  
No comfort in the growing dark,  
For every laugh, a shadow cast,  
A fleeting joy that doesn't last.

They seek a hand, a kindred heart,  
A voice to say, "You're not apart,"  
Yet words are hushed, no solace found,  
In a world where silence is profound.

Still they press on, with courage rare,  
A beacon in their own despair,  
For in their heart, a fire bright,  
Refuses to be quenched by night.

A strength within, though tested sore,  
To find the light, to hope for more,  
And though the world may turn away,  
Their spirit fights to see the day.

So to the soul who battles on,  
Know that your courage isn't gone,  
For in the dark, your light will grow,  
A testament to all you know.

And one day, hearts will see your fight,  
Will break their silence with the light,  
To stand beside you, hand in hand,  
In a world where hope can truly stand.

Isobelle Audsley

# The Mask I Wear

With laughter bright and a smile so wide,  
I dance through the day, my joy a disguise.  
In crowded rooms, I play the part,  
But beneath the surface, I'm falling apart.

I paint my cheeks in shades of delight,  
Crafting a persona that feels just right.  
But behind these eyes, a tempest swirls,  
A silent battle in a world that twirls.

Conversations flow like a sparkling stream,  
Yet inside, I'm tangled in a restless dream.  
The weight of the world feels heavy and real,  
But I wrap it in ribbons, a mask to conceal.

Friends see the glow, the laughter, the spark,  
Unaware of the shadows that dwell in the dark.  
I nod and I cheer, play my well-rehearsed role,  
While whispers of worry echo in my soul.

Each night I retreat, when the curtain falls,  
To face the stillness in these four lonely walls.  
The smile fades slowly, a ghost in the night,  
And I search for the strength to step into the light.

Yet hope flickers softly, a flame deep inside,  
Reminding me gently that I don't have to hide.  
For every bright face carries stories untold,  
And in sharing our truths, we find warmth in the cold.

So, I'll take off the mask, let the tears flow free,  
Embrace the struggle, let myself just be.  
For in the cracks of my heart, there's beauty to find,  
A tapestry woven with both joy and the grind.

Tristan Stewart



# Silence

Silence screams through empty halls,  
A mirage of voices amidst the abyss.  
Looking for a way  
out  
and shouting for a hand, I can't see my way  
out.  
The quiet deafens me,  
My ears are bleeding.  
I can't see, I'm suffocating in the silence.

Suffocated but not consumed.  
Look for the light, the way  
out.  
Just keep up the fight.  
Echoes of tortured souls whisper down the corridor.  
Their cries for hope brought down by the glaring silence,  
whisps of light dragged down by violence,  
and the stars never shine for these lost ones.  
Take their hand and join their cause,  
become a shadow of what was.  
Eternal darkness and peace at what cost?  
You think you've won,  
but giving up means you've lost.  
The torment is silent, but the fire is lit.  
There's nothing you can do about it.

Daisy Wilson

## **Your Voice Counts**

In the quiet corners of your room,  
Where shadows linger, hope can bloom.  
A whisper stirs, a gentle sound,  
A truth that echoes all around.

Each word you speak, each thought you share,  
Holds the power to change the air,  
To lift the weary, spark a flame.  
To call for justice, break the shame.

When silence reigns, the loudest fears,  
Grow heavy with the weight of years.  
But you can rise, let courage flow,  
With every breath you take, let them know.

So let your voice break through the night,  
A chorus rising, bold and bright.  
In unity, let spirits mount -  
Remembering always,  
Your Voice Counts.

Ffyon Burnhan

## The Easy Goodbye

I wasn't to know  
it would be the last time  
I'd be spending time  
with you.  
My last goodbye,  
my last hug and kiss.  
I knew it might be the last time,  
but I didn't think  
this would be it.  
Mum told us:  
never to argue before bed –  
it might be the last time we ever see each other.  
It's hard waking up and not hearing you.  
This might hurt forever but I know  
I'll always be related to you.  
I love you.  
Mum sees you in my eyes and I see you in them too.  
Our eyes were full of life.  
It was easy saying goodbye  
because I didn't know.