

# HOPE

Love the Words winners'  
poetry anthology for  
International Dylan  
Thomas Day 2020

Every year, 'Love the Words' (a quote from Dylan Thomas) asks for contributions to its annual poetry competition as part of International Dylan Thomas Day, 14 May. This year, writers around the world were asked to enter poems on the theme of 'hope'. From just over 200 entries, then, comes this collection of 30 poems, all very different, by adults and also (where an age is given) by children. Co-judged by Dylan's grand-daughter and creative director of Dylan Day, Hannah Ellis, and by poet and former coordinator Mab Jones, we hope you enjoy this collection that is sometimes startling, sometimes serious, but also sweet, sonorous, and sublime.

*Winning poem in our 10 and under age category*

### **Hope**

in the purple of my bike  
the blood of the pine sap  
the blue of the microphone I sing into  
and the blue in my brother's room  
the brown of the study  
the yellow and rainbow colours of my room  
and the plum of Mam and Dad's,  
I saw all this on the treasure hunt around the house  
and the blackest yellowest bee in the window.

The two hedgehogs last night, they are hope  
they sounded like someone writing  
with chalks. I heard the wind gushing  
through my ears, me singing, and Dad  
shouting from the other side of the field,  
the sound of my javelin when it fell onto the grass,  
the sound of Mam's pen moving ever so fast,  
the sound of my toy horses clip clopping.  
I heard the bee's buzzing blend  
with a fast car on the road.

Ava Gwenan John, 10, Wales

*Winning poem in our 11-18 age category*

### **Found Poem from My Lockdown Journal**

Becoming distant, feeling far,  
I continue with our time in lock-down  
curious of what's to come. Our life  
has now been thrown to another field,  
a new field.

Across the valley, echoes of clapping  
and echoes of a still-strong community,  
standing together. Though we are 2 meters  
apart, our minds are not.

Eurion Gwyn John, 13, Wales

*Winning poem in our adult category*

### **Little Robins, Pandemic-Born**

This year, April is half pear tree, half wood bee,  
all flutter, all violent with virus.

The street folk huddle in their homes,  
leaving tulip buds and lilac to blossom in quiet.

In my yard, petals drift on a tempered breeze,  
swirling cotton-in-a-windstorm, joyously untouched.

Inside and dull-eyed, I daydream schools of fish  
into the blue sky aquatic.

On my windowsill, a mother robin has built a nest.

Each dew-kissed morning,  
she feeds her babies earthworms,  
round to bursting. Her little ones,  
still with their egg teeth, smile Cheerio grins, unafraid.

As days pass, they get their feathers. Their eyes open,  
jam gooey and blinking. They sing to clover patches,  
ruddy bricks, wisp clouds, and katydids...

They love this world that seems so lonely.

One day, they will fledge into the unfamiliar Spring,  
and I will fledge with them, all green, all warm, all happy.

Until then, we wait together.

Bailee Wilson, USA

### **Autumn Leaves**

We're all just autumn leaves and dust,  
scattering, swirling,  
skating along the road.

We're all just mulch and caterpillars,  
discarded fronds, antennae and scales.  
Ground up by the pestle and mortar of a century of shoes.

We're all just conkers and rays of sunlight,  
tumbling to the forest floor.  
Drunk, greedy and fat,

we lie, belly up, smiling at the stars.

Rebecca Sian Brown, Wales

## **Iris**

In the garden of my heart  
are many textures, shades, and hues  
among these varied works of art  
is one alone and far apart  
in the deepest shade of tempered blue

While wind and rain and storm arrive  
and every stem and petal torment  
when impossible that none could thrive  
and fare the hail and gales alive  
one tall blue stately stem, unbent

No matter what the storms dole out  
or dark skies, day after day  
with never a fear or wary doubt  
through raging flood and parching drought  
the iris stands, my lone bouquet.

Donna Nemmers , USA

## **Where there are no bells**

Where there are no bells let us ring them  
Let us peal them with every chord of our hearts  
To rival the birds in the treetops, fill the air with every tune we know.  
Bring all the childhood hymns back to our ears  
All the Michaels and their rowing boats, all the mornings  
That are breaking in every apartment, every kitchen  
Every hospital room that is sparse and empty of loved ones.  
Let us remember the hallelujahs  
Bring the praise songs that have split asunder the heavens  
With cymbals and every lost voice trembling with the lack of vigour  
Too troubled to take the journey again back to the Sunday schools of  
promise  
Where our young voices sweetened the incantations  
With our innocence and frantic beating pulses  
At the sunshine breaking through each window, each splintered fence  
Quickening with the NOW of life.  
The choir from the backyard. The choir from the armies.  
The choir from the temples. The choir from the front rooms.  
The choir from the church that is US.  
The clapping of hands in the street  
Our hopeful, broken bodies whose ears are the last ones to leave.  
Let us hum. Let us utter. Let us listen.  
Let us remember the music.  
Where there are no bells let us ring them.  
Where there are no bells let us ring them.

Maggie Harris, UK

## Feeling

Peace of mind in rocky edges,  
Sensing our way around seascope flashes,  
Something other than dreams and wishes.

The bridge that binds us from trepidation to quiet expectation,  
The running current, the common denominator:  
Being Bing and Bob  
And Dorothy waltzing  
On the unseen road.

Hope reflects our relationship to all within and beyond us;  
A measure, a code for what matters; what makes us tick  
And chime.

It is not a magic wand but something to cling onto  
As we revolve around the sun and open ourselves  
To its warmth in our dusk, dawn communal, beautiful existence.

Feeling. Infinite feeling.

Huw Meirion Lewis, Wales

## Rebirth

What's this limbo  
like a Tibetan Bardo  
where souls meet  
electronically.

Disembodied voices  
fearful reassuring  
deepening bonds  
boundlessly

Conversation song  
in zoom driven spaces  
making sweet doorstep  
cacophony

When we meet again  
on trains and buses  
will we rebuild walls  
instinctively

Or is the world turning  
through a new vibration  
moving us to connect  
courageously

As we reach across  
the two metre space  
with a smile a common  
humanity

Barbara Meredith, England

### **Hope: A Tale for All Ages**

Hope is the grip on your skipping rope handle  
A curious friend trading for makeshift bucket stilts  
A knowing grin to distant figures when the mid-afternoon bell chimes  
An infallible distraction from your backpack, sodden with relics of  
juice

Hope is a first date and the twinge in his smirk  
An irrepressible curl of the pale upper lip  
When the syllables 'good night' are gently skewed in the dusk  
By a consenting nod and, 'until next time'

Hope is a medium roast Arabica coffee bean  
A frothy cappuccino in an office too bright for 9am  
An overcast sky protesting the five-day working week  
While the payday doughnuts loom around the corner

Hope is two, becoming four, becoming six  
Pattering down the staircase after mother's wine curfew  
The hearth exploding with sparks of intoxicating orange  
And the room blossoming with chestnut and crisp cinnamon

The commotion around a creaking hospital bed  
Sporadic charades of grandchildren playing doctors and nurses  
Older silhouettes dripping with the grief incumbent upon them  
Hope is the human shaped dent we leave in the pillow.

Hannah Newberry, Wales

## **awaiting the birds**

*A Golden Shovel on Emily Dickinson*

each spring, we let ourselves hope  
on the return of the birds. in each is  
a flower holding itself half-opened, like the  
sun emerging from a cracked eggshell, a thing  
so delicate it dissipates in air. each spring, we wait with  
outstretch hands to catch the falling petals, the falling feathers.

each summer, we make sand-castles to shelter ourselves from a sun  
that  
burns too bright. we watch the lonesome jay which perches  
in the lower branches of our dogwood tree, his daughters which sleep  
in  
the crumbling leaves and folded grasses of the  
nest he has built far above—a nest in the shape of his soul.

each autumn, we run through the dry wildgrasses and  
call after the birds as they fly south. the mother sings  
an old folk song, but not to us. we listen as the  
daughters somersault in the sky overhead, testing the tune  
against the rhythm of the wind. we run, without  
stopping to breathe, until the field meets the  
river swollen with belated rains and the rushing current swallows our  
words

all winter, we wait, counting days by the settling and  
melting of snow against the windowpanes. we try never

to ask when they will return, for the snow only stops  
when we forget them. the moment it does, the hope which has  
lingered at  
our doorstep all this time, sheltering from the cold, bursts in—its light,  
empyrean, lifting us all.

Maggie Wang, USA

## Shocking

I see the jetty's spars  
have been broken by the shock  
of winter gales and crashing ice. Still  
I'd be safer in the water  
than among the young folk hereabouts  
who mill around, caring not one jot  
for viruses or social distancing.  
It feels like no time – last summer was it? –

when scaleless, naked mermaids (German I think)  
slid themselves into the cool lake  
right under my original-sin-struck  
presbyterian gaze. Shocked I was  
though not quickly enough  
not to notice. These days  
I'd compare myself more  
to jagged wood than to such

lissome creatures. Oh, but please  
let them come back!  
Let planks be nailed together,  
let us splash around  
and all be put to rights.  
Let everything be stout and strong

and even when January comes round –  
assuming that it does - unshockable.

'Lakelorn', Finland



## How to Make a Rainbow

You'll wait  
until that moment  
you think the sky  
can't get any darker –  
A child running through  
grass, waist-high,  
scrabbling over potholes  
a deer's hoofs have made.

Years later, you'll look  
at photos of that  
morose sky, heavy  
with impending rain:  
'Apocalyptic, it was!  
Never seen one so dark...'

But right now, all you  
can think about is  
the need to get away  
from the storm  
you know is coming –  
You know is coming,  
but can't outrun.

Even though, years later  
you'll look back  
on that moment,

knowing what  
came next –  
The triumphant arc  
of love and light –

Right now, all you can see  
is the gathering Dark

And there,  
Right there –

Refract light  
through tears –  
Wait...

Rebecca Lowe, Wales

## Hope

When all is lost  
A secret voice tells you not to quit  
When all is dark  
A ray of light shows the path ahead

Hope is like a candle  
That lights a gloomy room  
Hope is like the stars  
That shine through the clouds

Don't look for it around  
For it is in abound  
Within you, in your own mind  
Just seek and ye shall find

Kavya Pradeep, 10, India

## One Evening

Pavements malleable in sudden sunlight  
might swamp you in their foetid pall  
were you to stumble, fall. So to push  
the incipient nightmare back  
you walk their ashy softness fast  
to where park gates are shut—  
no infants playing on the grass,  
no children taunting, calling there—  
though comma butterflies still  
punctuate the air—  
expecting to be swathed, as ever,  
by rush-hour's heavy traffic fumes—  
the haze & daze of drivers heading home  
in the coffins of their cabs, their coughing cars—  
instead, you find an evening's calm.  
For once, the air is sweet.  
Then from that row of plane-trees  
all along the pavement edge  
a sudden splintering of song  
unheard in many weary city years:  
the liquid murmur, trill & roll, the spark  
of blackbirds pouring music out against  
encroaching dark.

Lizzie Ballagher, UK

## **On those days.**

there are days when the corrugated clouds  
hold their breath.  
when the sun becomes a pupil  
in an everlasting grey eye.  
days where the ground is but a sponge  
and the gravel shrivels to ash.  
when your heart weighs heavier than the Earth,  
gravity lassos your knees  
and the rope burns your legs.

on those days, drag.  
Drag the muscle back to your bones.  
Drag cathartic tears from the clouds.  
Let the ground soak  
and the ash bring bloom.  
The sun will begin to swell  
gold from its glands.  
Make gravity  
but a seven-letter word.

Come,  
stay outside long enough  
to see the sky blush again.

Again.  
It'll always come again.

Sanjyokta Deshmukh, India / Wales

## **Sometimes**

Cold Sunday morning out for breakfast -  
convincing yourself you aren't hungover -  
black coffee and apple juice - early daffodil  
in a slim glass bottle - yellow moment of happiness  
rolling out the possibility of a whole future -  
neat house and a full fridge - good progress  
on the contemporary novel - mid-week plans  
you won't cancel - currently managed anxiety -  
sky the remembered colour of pencil crayons  
- the clean enormous promise of just this.

Emily Cotterill, Wales

## **'Hope Springs Eternal'**

Where do you go when light streams through a window  
Pooling inkily on dusty tomes, warm weather clothes hidden at the bottom of the box

Twittering birds are bearable alarms to mark the plodding seasons  
At the bottom of the stairs, time measured in untied shoelaces

Trees sway gently to spring's secret song, treasuring every beat  
There is food to eat and work to do and words to say

But spring crept in and won the day

Kate Lucas, 17, UK

## **I love you, goodnight**

He took my hand,  
papery and paled,  
worn flimsy  
with medication  
and boredom  
from bed-ridden days,

but the slim chink  
between mattresses  
did not stop him  
unfolding his arm  
to cross it, whispering  
I love you, goodnight  
through the shadow  
of old age.

Ellie Nevin, England

## **The Kiss**

Where the sheep have cracked  
a path in the egg of the hill  
you will find the mizzle hush  
of these dull corona days -  
the bluster shoves you on  
to a place where even the crows'  
black prayers take shelter.

Where the path turns on the oval,  
a hawthorn bush scrawls  
love letters to the wind,  
telling how it holds bright keys  
of mistletoe in its language  
of spikes and membranes.

The corals and dun of lichen  
nurtured on the branches  
say this is patience,  
come snag your unready heart

and break – no,  
hatch

it

open.

JLM Morton, England

## **Birdsong**

A bird in a dark room, strangled by constraints.  
Artful lies shoved down her beak,  
disguised as pellets.  
They tell her to sing; how high, how slow,  
to croon or to quiver.  
Fondle her plumes  
between each wrinkle of their finger.  
Shackles bestow her feet.  
They convince her, they are anklets.  
When the metal makes her bleed,  
she looks through the gaps in her forlorn cage.  
To grasp her song, this time, in a different tune.  
A monkish warble, to an unleashed gospel.  
She prays for the shackles to soon hang loose.  
Tunes no longer to be forced,  
searching for the light, to come streaming through.

Iona Mandal, 13, UK

## **Hope is a very good looking cauliflower**

In lock-down hope travels along a line  
between home and the local shop.

*Hello my lovely and what would you like  
I've a very good looking cauliflower here.*

Hope is the quiver in my voice as I splutter the words,

*I tend to go for personality over looks  
I'll have the broccoli please.*

Breaking into laughter, I add a bar of fruit and nut  
to my list,

*essential, she says, in a crisis.*

Julia Angell, UK

## Recipe

Rinse the beans. Thoroughly. Pick them over like a bird. Check them for stones and imperfections. Should you find either, remove them. Run your fingers through the beans. Listen to the sounds that are made as you move through them. Is it different from what you expected? Cover them in water. Let them soak overnight. When you wake they will have changed. They will be bloated and full, straining against their skin. If you prefer, you can stay awake and watch them all night long. They will still change. Whether you notice it or not.

Richard Daly, Wales

## Vision of New Worlds

(to Dylan Thomas)

Your words  
as parables of sunlight  
unveil visions  
with blurred edges  
new worlds melting  
into fluctuating immensity.

Into your swirling darkness

I fall.

Lift me with wide wings

higher and higher into the blue.

Bring me to know the vibrations of the sun

where

blades of fire evaporate

where

I can finally savor

the emerald kiss

and the indigo breath

in the rainbow's

evanescent embrace

Lidia Chiarelli, Italy

## Hope

It had seemed hidden for some time  
Behind curtains and banners  
And headlines.  
But  
It moved  
In dances and applause.  
In cards and telephone calls.  
It breathed between neighbours  
And friends and mothers.  
It spoke in the laughter of children.  
It held the hand of those alone  
And sang the songs  
Of those who had no voice.  
It came in sunlight and in flowers.  
It worked the wards and corridors.  
It turned a smile upon us  
When we held our heads down.  
It raised the roof  
In shooting stars and magic moons.  
It smiled behind masks.  
It waited, patient, still.  
Be patient, it said, wait.  
I am here. I am waiting.  
I am ready.

Mark Lewis, Wales

## Each night I hope

to begin tomorrow  
with the simple joy  
of fetching two mugs  
to our table.

Fiona Ritchie Walker, UK



## Hope

The quieter skies and flowers blooming.  
The ducks oblivious, quacking, flapping.  
My father safe and well, another year older  
The sunshine  
and days of rain for a change  
the droplets falling, gentle patting.  
Toilet paper back on the shelves.  
The sourdough loaf, not quite right  
but tasted good  
smothered with baked cheese.  
I'm still safe  
home working, dreaming,  
online calls and WhatsApp pinging.  
My world is smaller  
but still turning.

Louisa Guise, UK

## The Hope Printer

I yearn to be an inventor now and find  
a new way to install some hope  
into the world, no fake cartridges  
that refuse to work, leave smudges,  
jam the workings and block change.  
No. I want success. No need for patents.  
I won't care if it is named as mine or not as  
I just want to rearrange the way this world  
is dropping out of sense. No pretence,  
no lies, no force to prioritise more money  
over people, over people's lives.  
I want a giant 3-D printer that will tell  
the truth, give us the tools to shape  
a certain future for all human children  
and for trees, for all the animals,  
for us—for there is an us that counts.  
I want to make a printer that prints hope  
in vast and incontestable amounts!

Denni Turp, Wales

**Hope is a four letter word**

(at Alexandra Gardens)

In my park  
a single blossom soaks up the sun,  
winds in a spiral on its fall,  
touches the nape of a bulbous finch  
feasting on worms.

In my park,  
tall white pillars hold up the war-dead,  
a soldier boy clutching a wreath  
under angelic dolphins look up  
as droplets stutter shaping their fall.

In my park,  
footsteps from springs before  
loiter as plaques on benches,  
on carved bricks stood before saplings,  
magnolia daub the congregation of paths.

In my park,  
hyacinths and tulips float  
above parched daffodil stalks,  
the scent from an unknown white lily  
covers the entrance off City Hall  
from April to dawn.

In my park,  
hope is a four letter word  
etched on stone.

Taz Rahman, UK

## **A Heron Pushing Forward In Space**

I saw hope once; a heron.  
Lifting a foot ponderously unstuck  
in an estuary as quiet as it was grey.

Rain mist scrubbing out  
air, land, sea. Me.

On unsure footing  
overlooking pure pewter  
I hovered on an uneven stairway  
descending to the shore.

I sensed the sliced steps beneath my soles.  
Each level sloshed with wetness,  
the distance between feet – nothingness,  
measuring motion prudently,  
slippery with misjudgement.

I neared the heron, stock-still  
on Ovaltine sand just-mixed,  
oozing silk, sludge glimmering.

The heron was not stuck.  
Entirely present it tipped against time,  
knee tremoring,  
crooking the bend in its raised leg  
to gently push forward in space.

I saw hope once; a heron  
hovering ahead of the waves.

Jessica Douthwaite, UK

## Hope is Tubing Down the Delaware River

The teenagers gaggle at the gates, each wait to be handed  
an inflatable ring in their favourite cotton candy colour.

They are dressed how they want, sunglasses perched  
on their heads like crowns. They are getting closer

to the river, stepping foot on its bank which curves  
through five states. They are ready to be baptised by summer, so

when they reach the water, they dunk their whole bodies,  
then throw out their tubes and flop: some belly up,

some down, but all heading south, together. The current propels  
them forward: tubes squeak, laughs rise like kites. Soon they will approach

a section of river cluttered with rocks. Soon they will slide past  
the copperhead's nest. Soon, they will arrive at a length notorious for rapids.

But these teens are still light enough to be buoyant. Soon they will reach  
for their waterproof cameras. They can't wait to see

what's just around the bend.

Christina Thatcher, Wales

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