

The Lack of Choice by Robin, 7R

The lack of choice
Is a broken keyboard
It types by itself
And refuses to let you interfere



The lack of choice
Is a nightmare
Your worst fears appear before your eyes
And you can't do anything about it



The lack of choice
Is an endless tunnel
There is nowhere to turn
No method of escape
No sign of the outside world



The lack of choice is helplessness, oblivion,
suffering
Your life is played out in front of you
As if somebody else
Is living it.

Judge's Comments: *I love the original treatment of the subject - thinking about what it's like NOT to have choice AND Robin's great use of metaphor.*

Who said it would be easy? By Carolina, 8C

I sat and stared at the blank paper
My thoughts muddled and chaotic
One kid said they would write about a love forgone
Another said they would write about popcorn

I could write about the mythical gods,
Like Artemis and Zeus;
I could write about the colourful Autumn weather,
Or how the wind makes your teeth chatter.



I could write about No-Face the ghost
And how it's just a spirit looking for
answers;
I could write about young people's
superpowers
Or their never-ending screen hours.

The next thing I know the teacher says,
"Time's up!" and I panic;
Too many clashing ideas, nothing I could
settle on
Where had the time gone?

Judge's Comments: *I love the way Caolina tells us
how difficult it is to write a poem but SHOWS us
how easy it is!*



A girl leans over and exclaims,
"Wow, you've written a lot!"
And what is more: She's right.



On Rainy Days I Wish by Matilda, 9C

On rainy days I wish
I spoke with the howl of a wolf
Or soared along the pathways
Of the air with swallows



I could sink into the icy deep
As a whale, feel the water
Enfold me, know the rhythm
Of ancient currents



Or outlive time in the pale
Shell of the moon
Among the bright eyes
Of stars



But instead I watch the rain
Slide down the windowpane
While my mind wanders
On the ocean floor
Or sings with the lark in the sky.



Judge's Comments: *I love Matilda's beautiful use of natural imagery which paints vivid pictures of what she imagines on rainy days.*

Three Faces by Lamia, 10M

Three faces stare from the smooth flat glass ahead
The answer lies within reach - which to choose?

A girl, happy, features distorted in laughter not quite
human

Incandescent in her joy, smile gleaming

Like the flat side of a knife.

She is for the people, the others

Poised at the edge of a cliff, safe from the waves
that crash below.

They prey on grins and giggles,

Gobbling them up as a thirsty man swallows wine.

This girl is the first.



The second is dulled, opaque.
Though the words that drip from her mouth
Wound like sharpened blades
Eager to draw first blood.
Her portrait is terrifying, a cackling silhouette
Tumbling through wind-sticken skies.
She never lands, suspended between worlds
On the very precipice of madness.



The third is different. Figure blurred, contorted.
She is a trick of the light.
Blink and you'll miss it.
Silent and screaming her cries are dismissed
As the whisper of the wind through the trees.
Three people, three masks.

Each more fickle than the last.
So which to choose today?

Judge's Comments: *This poem is brilliant in its razor sharp observations and Sylvia Plath-like imagery.*



Fireworks by Margot, 11M

Oxford, early evening,
Wide pink sky,
Running around in the garden that raised us all,
Birds circle in the sky,
Soaring like the balls we'd throw as children,
Inside, Dhilan plays the piano,
His hands soar over the keys, swift as the birds,
Notes tumble out of the window
The same notes I heard as I met Shreya's eyes
across the aisle,
They were full of tears.



It's as if time blinked while we grew up,
we learned how to stretch it between our fingers,
let it patch over the times you weren't there,
Sculpt it into memories,
Sunlit summers became tears over dinner in April,
And in the Oxford garden, summer became autumn.

Now the gentle wind grows cooler,
its fingers brush against the window,
We sit together and talk, eat,
while underneath it all,
Our hearts beat together like drums, still aching,
united in a silence that shakes the floor,
And echoes off the walls,
It runs upstairs, outside, looking for you,
But you are gone.



The night sky rises over the garden,
We gather under the starlight.
Fireworks burst into life above us,
Illuminating every corner of the garden,
Red:
Snatches of laughter,
Ela's skirt swirling as we dance,
Gold:
The sun setting,
Glittering waves in Durdle Door,
Green:
The carpet of grass underfoot.
The click of a camera,
Photos of three generations in the garden together,
We watch and think of you.



In the end, the funeral was spun together like a web,
Shimmering threads linked together,
A tapestry of light and dark -
A sea of people who knew both:
How you locked yourself away,
Became trapped in a place no one could reach,
The whitewashed walls of the hall invited reflection -
becoming the deepest maroon, a muddy purple, a soft,
dark red with streaks of the brightest gold,
A room full of love,
People say that life begins and it ends,
That we pass through like shapeless visitors in a
storybook,
But I remember that room,
Every person there bound by the invisible thread
That is your life





Judge's Comments: *This is a brilliant poem for the maturity and sophistication of its ideas and the exquisite evocation of time, place and the memory of someone who has been lost.*

Now time is in our hands,
And we mould it into memories,
I warm it up, stretch it out,
There are things there I cannot forget,
The things time can't smooth over
But there also are things I choose to
remember
Your voice, your laugh,
The hints of you that I see reflected in all of
us,
But above all, those early days,
When we would stand outside on the dewy
grass,
To hear the Oxford bells on a Sunday
morning.