

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Preliminary Grade One (Age 4 – 6)**

**Boys**

## **The Dustman**

By Clive Sansom

Every Thursday morning  
Before we're quite awake,  
Without the slightest warning  
The house begins to shake  
    With a Biff! Bang!  
    Biff! Bang! Biff!  
It's the Dustman, who begins  
    (Bang! Crash!)  
To empty all the bins  
Of their rubbish and their ash  
    With a Biff! Bang!  
    Biff! Bang! Bash!

## **Teddy Bear**

By L.H. Allen

Teddy Bear  
Sat on a chair,  
With ham and jam  
And plum and pear.

*“This is queer”,*  
Said Teddy Bear,  
*“The more I eat*  
*The less is there!”*

## **'The Small Brown Bear'**

By Michael Baldwin

The small brown bear  
fishes  
with stony paws

eating ice salmon  
all waterfall slippery  
till his teeth ache.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Preliminary Grade One (Age 4 – 6)**

**Girls**

## **The Furry Home**

By J.M. Westrup

It I were a mouse  
And wanted a house,  
I think I would choose  
My new red shoes.  
Furry edges,  
Fur inside,  
What a lovely  
Place to hide!  
I'd not travel,  
I'd not roam –  
Just sit in  
My furry home.

## **The Proud Cat**

Author unknown

A very small cat had a very big bow.  
She thought she was lovely, so stuck up, you know.  
She jumped around town like a black rubber ball,  
With her nose in the air, and no manners at all.  
One day, I can tell you, she had no more airs,  
She tripped on her bow, and fell down the stairs.  
Her mother was sorry, but what could she do.  
Pride must have a fall, we all know that's true.

## **`A Greeting'**

By Rose Fyleaman

I went to say good morning  
to a little furry bunny.  
He sat beside his doorway  
for the day was bright and sunny.  
But oh, I grieve to tell you  
He would not stay to play.  
He turned his tail and bobbed it  
and quickly ran away.

## **`MICE'**

By Eleanor Farjeon

I think Mice are rather nice.  
Their tails are long, their faces small,  
they haven't any chins at all.  
Their ears are pink, their teeth are white,  
they run about the house at night.  
They nibble things they shouldn't touch,  
and no one seems to like them much.  
But I think Mice are nice.

**Suggested Poems for  
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**Preliminary Grade Two (Age 5 – 7)**

**Boys**

# **Double-Barreled Ding-Dong-Bat**

By Dennis Lee

Why,  
You -  
Double-barreled,  
Disconnected,  
Supersonic,  
Ding-dong-bat:

Don't you dare come  
near me, or I'll  
Disconnect you  
Just like that!

## **Bubble Gum**

By Nina Payne

I'm in trouble  
made a bubble  
peeled it off my nose

Felt a rock  
inside my sock  
got gum between my toes

Made another  
told my brother  
we could blow a pair

Give three cheers  
now our ears  
are sticking to our hair

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Preliminary Grade Two (Age 5 – 7)**

**Girls**

## **'The Magic Word'**

By Martin Gardener

**"MORE JAM"** said Rosie to her Mum.  
**"I WANT MORE JAM"** said she.  
But no one heard the **MAGIC** word....  
Mum.. took a sip of tea.

**"THE JAM! THE JAM! THE JAM!"** she cried,  
Her voice rang loud and clear.  
**"I'D LIKE TO SPREAD IT ON MY BREAD"**  
But no one seemed to hear.

**"Please pass the Jam"** Rose said at last  
Now that's the thing to say.  
When Mother heard the magic word –  
She passed it right away.

## **THE BRAVE MOUSE**

By Irene Rawnsley

Annabel,  
Annabel,  
Come and see here;  
A mouse is asleep  
In tabby cat's ear!

He climbed up her tail  
As she lay in a heap;  
Ran over her body  
Then fell fast asleep.

I wonder  
I wonder  
For brown mouse's sake  
If he or if tabby  
Will be first *awake?*

## **THINGS I LIKE**

By Marjorie H. Greenfield

I like blowing bubbles, and swinging on a swing;  
I love to take a country walk and hear the birdies sing.

I like little kittens, and I love puppies too;  
And calves and little squealing pigs and baby ducks, don't you?

I like picking daisies, I love my Teddy bear;  
I like to look at picture books in Daddy's big armchair.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade One (Age 6 – 8)**

**Boys**

## **Hey, Bug!**

By Lilian Moore

Hey, bug, stay!  
Don't run away.  
I know a game that we can play.

I'll hold my fingers very still  
And you can climb a finger-hill.

No, no.  
Don't go.

Here's a wall - a tower, too,  
a tiny bug town, just for you.  
I've a cookie. You have some.  
Take this oatmeal cookie crumb.

Hey, bug, stay!  
Hey, bug!  
Hey!

## **The Wrong Start**

By Marchette Chute

I got up this morning and meant to be good,  
But things didn't happen the way that they should.

I lost my toothbrush,  
I slammed the door,  
I dropped an egg  
on the kitchen floor,  
I spilled some sugar  
and after that  
I tried to hurry  
and tripped on the cat.

Things may get better. I don't know when.  
I think I'll go back and start over again.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade One (Age 6 – 8)**

**Girls**

## **Stories**

By John D. Sheridan

Last thing at night,  
Before we go to bed,  
Mum tells stories  
out of her head.  
We all sit quiet,  
We don't make a sound –  
Some on chairs  
And some on the ground;  
Keeping very still  
And with no wish to play,  
For this is the happiest  
Hour of the day;  
When we gather round the fire,  
Before we go to bed,  
And Mum tells stories  
Out of her head.

## **'At the Park'**

By Tony Bradman

I don't want to go out,  
I don't want to play,  
It's cold and it's windy  
It's a *horrible* day.

I don't like the park,  
And I don't like the swings.  
I'll just sit on the bench,  
and ignore everything.

I'll sulk and I'll pout,  
I'll hide in my scarf,  
I'll pull down my hat,  
and I'll scream if you laugh.

But hold on a minute,  
That see-saw looks fun!  
The clouds are all going  
and here comes the sun.

Oh, I'll swing on the swings,  
I'll run round and play.  
I'm so glad we came, Mum,  
Can we stay here all day?

# **`SLEEPY TOWN'**

By Marjory Royce

Sleepy Town is very nice,  
At breakfast you have strawberry ice,  
For dinner there is Apple Foam,  
A thing you never get at home.

And all the meals are served by cats  
wearing little sailor hats.

You must try with might and main  
To catch that very special train,  
The engine driver is a Hare,  
The railway guard is a baby Bear.

Shut your eyes and you'll be there !

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Two (Age 6 – 9)**

**Boys**

## **The Clown**

By Dorothy Aldis

I like to see  
The spotted clown  
Throwing dishes  
In the air.  
When they've started  
Coming down  
He looks as though  
He didn't care,  
But catches each one  
Perfectly,  
Over and over,  
Everytime,  
One and two and  
One-two-three-  
Like a pattern  
Or a rhyme

## **BIRD TALK**

By Aileen Fisher

**'Think...'** said **the** Robin,  
**'Think...'** said **the** Jay,  
sitting in the garden,  
talking one day.

**'Think** about people -  
**the** way **they** grow:  
**they** don't have feathers  
at all, you know.  
**They** don't eat beetles,  
**they** don't grow wings,  
**they** don't like sitting  
on wires and **things.'**

**'Think!'** said **the** Robin.  
**'Think!'** said **the** Jay.  
'Aren't people funny  
to be **that** way?'

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Two (Age 6 – 9)**

**Girls**

## **Waking Up**

By Mary Wilsher

I wake up in the morning and stretch my  
arms wide,  
Over my head and down to my side;  
Reach up for my dressing-gown high on the  
door,  
And stoop for my slippers that lie on the  
floor.  
Oh, dear! One has fallen far under the bed,  
I can just about reach it – Ouch!  
That was my head.  
When I've had a good wash, brushed my  
teeth and my hair,  
I creep from my room, put one foot on the  
stair  
and softly descend, to where Mummy below  
is making the breakfast. I call out "*Peep-*  
*bo*",  
Then give her a hug and sit down on my  
stool,  
Say my grace, eat breakfast, and run off to  
school.

## **A-TISH-OO!**

By Charlotte Druitt Cole

Last night a grey mouse,  
When I was in bed,  
Kept sneezing and sneezing;  
“A-tish-oo!” he said,  
For this poor little mouse  
Had a cold in his head.

He got out his hanky  
(Green, spotted with red),  
For, having no pocket,  
He kept it instead  
Tucked up his coat-sleeve;  
“A-tish-oo”, he said,  
For this little mouse had a terrible  
Cold in his head.

His wife gave him gruel  
Without any bread;  
Put his feet in hot water,  
Ere going to bed;  
But “A-tish-oo! A-tish-oo!  
A-tish-oo!” he said,  
For this mouse had a terrible,  
Terrible, terrible, TERRIBLE  
Cold in his head.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Three (Age 7 – 10)**

**Boys**

# **THE BROWN BEAR**

By John Foster

In winter,  
When the cold winds blow,  
When the land  
Is covered with snow  
The brown bear sleeps.

In winter,  
When the nights come soon,  
When the land  
Freezes beneath the moon  
The brown bear dreams.

The brown bear  
Dreams of summer heat,  
Of berries,  
Honey, and nuts to eat.  
The brown bear sighs.

The brown bear  
Stirs, then digs down deep,  
Safe and sound  
In its winter sleep.  
The brown bear dreams.

# **SCHOOL**

By Michelle Magorian

My head is exhausted today  
The petrol inside has run out.  
I'm trying my best, but I just need a rest  
And I see that the Sun is still out.

I'm squeezing my head tight with thinking  
But the answers have all flown away.  
Can't read or add up, I'm sad and fed up.  
My brain wants to go out and play.

# **`MISSING'**

By A. A. Milne

*Has anybody seen my mouse?*

I opened his box for half a minute,  
Just to make sure he was really in it,  
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!  
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried...  
I think he's somewhere about the house.  
Has *anyone* seen my mouse?

*Uncle John, have you seen my mouse?*

Just a small sort of mouse, a dear little brown one,  
He came from the country, he wasn't a town one,  
So he'll feel all lonely in a Dublin street;  
Why, what could he possibly find to eat?

He must be somewhere, I'll ask Aunt Rose:  
Have *you* seen a mouse with a woffelly nose?  
Oh, somewhere about - He's just got out ...

Hasn't *anybody* seen my mouse?

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Three (Age 7 – 10)**

**Girls**

## **NIGHT RIDE**

By Celia Warren

When I can't sleep  
I shut my door  
And sit on the rug  
On my bedroom floor.

I open the window.  
I close my eyes  
And say magic words  
Till my carpet flies.

Zooming over gardens,  
Chasing after bats,  
Hooting like an owl  
And frightening the cats.

Then when I feel sleepy  
And dreams are in my head,  
I fly back through my window  
And snuggle down in bed.

## ***FLAMINGO***

By Eleanor Farjeon

Not a word! Not a word  
Under the moon  
When the glass of the blue lagoon  
Is stirred,  
And out of the reeds  
In her scarlet weeds  
    Steps the Flamingo.

A flame in flower,  
A flower in flame,  
As bright and brilliant  
As her name,  
    Princess Flamingo.

Radiant head!  
Fantastic grace!  
Delicate tread  
That leaves no trace.  
Before the moon  
Sinks out of sight  
She will take her flight  
From the blue lagoon,  
    Princess Flamingo.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Four (Age 9 – 11)**

**Boys**

## **Mother Doesn't Want a Dog**

By Judith Viorst

Mother doesn't want a dog.  
Mother says they smell,  
and never sit when you say sit,  
or even when you yell.  
And when you come home late at night  
and there is ice and snow,  
you have to go back out because  
the dumb dog has to go.

Mother doesn't want a dog.  
Mother says they shed,  
and always let the strangers in  
and bark at friends instead,  
and do disgraceful things on rugs,  
and track mud on the floor,  
and flop upon your bed at night  
and snore their doggy snore.

Mother doesn't want a dog.  
She's making a mistake.  
Because, more than a dog, I think  
She will not want this snake.

## **Motor-Cars**

By John D. Sheridan

When a motor-car is coming,  
Its lights, shining bright,  
Makes me think of dragons –  
And it gives me such a fright  
To think of fiery dragons,  
Great hungry dragons,  
Roaming through the forest in the dark, dark night.

When is motor-car is going,  
Its little tail light  
Makes me think of fairies –  
And it fills me with delight  
To think of dancing fairies,  
Happy moonbeam fairies,  
Showing firefly lanterns in the cool, starry night.

## **`PAINTING`**

By Irene Rawnsley

Yellow is my favourite colour;  
I'm painting like the sun,  
Yellow birds in golden bushes  
Till all the yellow's done.

Green is my favourite colour;  
I'm painting like the grass,  
Green woods and fields and rushes,  
The river flowing past.

Blue is my favourite colour;  
I'm painting like the sea,  
Blue sailing ships and fishes,  
And icebergs floating free.

Red is my favourite colour;  
I'm painting like a fire,  
Red twigs, then blazing branches  
As the flames leap higher.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Four (Age 9 – 11)**

**Girls**

## THE FAIRY HOUSE

By Rose Fyleaman

As I was coming homeward,  
One early Summers day,  
I met a little fairy  
Tripping on her way.  
Her bonnet was a bluebell,  
A daisy was her gown,  
Her wings were bits of sunshine  
Trimmed with thistledown

I think she'd been to market,  
For as she hurried by,  
I peeped into her basket  
To see what I could spy.  
A pair of golden slippers,  
A reel of silver thread,  
A tiny jar of honey  
And a weeny loaf of bread.

I hid amongst the tall grass,  
As still as still could be  
The fairy gave a **rat tat**  
Upon a hollow tree.  
And then, just for an instant  
I peeped into her house.  
And do you know? The front door  
Was opened - by a mouse!

## **Midnight Tea Party**

By Enid Blyton

I peeped one night in the playroom,  
and I was surprised to see  
the Pussycat and the Teddy,  
having their friends to tea.

The Clockwork Mouse and the old Jumbo,  
the Sailor Doll and the Clown,  
and all the Dolls from the Doll's House,  
at the table were sitting down.

Pussy had borrowed my tea set,  
and Teddy was cutting the cake.  
There were jellies a shake in the dishes,  
and crackers for each one to take.

You think I was dreaming? I wasn't!  
Today I found crumbs on the mat,  
and jelly in one of the dishes,  
and the Pussycat's blue paper hat.

# **The Reason I Like Chocolate**

By Nikki Giovanni

The reason I like chocolate  
is I can lick my fingers  
and nobody tells me I'm not polite

I especially like scary movies  
`cause I can snuggle with Mommy  
or my big sister and they don't laugh

I like to cry sometimes `cause  
everybody says "*What's the matter  
don't cry*"

and I like books  
for all those reasons  
but mostly `cause they just make me  
happy

and I really like  
to be happy

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Five (Age 10 – 12)**

**Boys**

## Space-Shuttle

By Judith Nicholls

Monday

my Aunt Esmeralda

Gave me one of those  
space-hoppers.

You know,

those big orange things

that you sit on and

they're supposed to take you to the stars.

Didn't take me any further than

the lamp-post –

and that hurt.

Tuesday

I gave it to my baby brother.

Do you know, he really believes

it's going to work!

Some people will believe

anything.

Friday.

Just had a postcard

from my brother.

From the moon.

It says

*'Had a good journey.*

*See you soon.*

*Just hopping off to Mars!'*

## **Be Glad Your Nose Is on Your Face**

By Jack Prelutsky

Be glad your nose is on your face,  
not pasted on some other place,  
for if it were where it is not,  
you might dislike your nose a lot.

Imagine if your precious nose  
were sandwiched in between your toes,  
that clearly would not be a treat,  
for you'd be forced to smell your feet.

Your nose would be a source of dread  
were it attached atop your head,  
it soon would drive you to despair,  
forever tickled by your hair.

Within your ear, your nose would be  
an absolute catastrophe,  
for when you were obliged to sneeze,  
your brain would rattle from the breeze.

Your nose, instead, through thick and thin,  
remains between your eyes and chin,  
not pasted on some other place –  
be glad your nose is on your face!

## **'Windy Nights'**

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Whenever the moon and stars are set,  
    Whenever the wind is high,  
All night long in the dark and wet,  
    A man goes riding by.  
Late in the night when the fires are out,  
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,  
    And ships are tossed at sea.  
By, on the highway, low and loud,  
    By at the gallop goes he.  
By at the gallop he goes, and then  
by he comes back at the gallop again.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Five (Age 10 – 12)**

**Girls**

# **The Sycamore Tree**

By Jonathan Always

I think I can,  
Said Mary Ann.  
I'm sure you can't,  
Said Mary's Aunt.  
It all depends,  
Said Mary's friends.  
So Mary's Mother  
And Sister and Brother,  
Discussed the matter  
With one another.  
They whispered together,  
Arguing whether  
They should agree,  
To let her climb  
The Sycamore Tree.  
They thought that  
They oughtn't  
To give their permission.  
For the Tree was  
In such a neglected condition.  
But, while they were talking,  
Without a stop  
Mary Ann  
Had climbed to the top.  
And there she balanced,  
(without permission),  
At the tipper-most top,  
In a topply position!

## **I don't want to go to Bed**

**By Mark Burgess**

I don't want to go to bed,  
I'd rather stay up late instead.  
I wish you weren't quite so meticulous –  
Bed at eight is quite ridiculous.  
With lots of time still left today  
Tomorrow is so far away.  
There's still so much I haven't done,  
Going to bed just isn't fun.  
Look at the clock – it isn't late –  
I'm just not going, so bed can wait!  
All right, all right, don't get cross,  
I'm going now, I know who's boss.  
Look, I'm nearly halfway there –  
My foot is on the bottom stair.  
You'll come and read? You said you would.  
You'd better or I won't be good.

## **`Colourful Moods'**

By Georgie Adams

When grown-ups say, '*I'm feeling BLUE,*'  
It really means they're sad.  
Or if they say, '*I'm in the PINK*'  
They're healthy, bright and glad.

It's strange the things that people say  
Like, envy turns you GREEN.  
Or someone's turned a ghostly WHITE  
At frightening things they've seen.

It's odd the colours grown-ups go  
Or say that they have been.  
I stay the colour of my skin  
Whatever mood I'm in.

## `FAIRIES'

By Rose Fyleman

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!  
It's not so very, very far away;  
You pass the gardener's shed and you just keep straight ahead -  
I do so hope they've really come to stay.  
There's a little wood, with moss in it and beetles  
And a little stream that quietly runs through;  
You wouldn't think they'd dare to come merry-making there -  
Well, they do.

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!  
They often have a dance on summer nights;  
The butterflies and bees make a lovely little breeze,  
And the rabbits stand about and hold the lights.  
Did you know that they could sit upon the moonbeams  
And pick a little star to make a fan,  
And dance away up there in the middle of the air?  
Well, they can.

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!  
You cannot think how beautiful they are;  
They all stand up and sing when the Fairy Queen and King  
Come gently floating down upon their car.  
The King is very proud and *very* handsome;  
The Queen - now can you guess who that could be  
(She's a little girl all day, but at night she steals away)?  
Well, it's **Me!**

## **Grade Six Poem Suggestions (Poem by Irish Author)**

## **Robot Kid**

by Patrick Chapman

Imagine being built with bolts  
and powered by a million volts.  
You'd have to wear a glove to shake  
the hands of other kids – or make

them disappear in puffs of smoke!  
And then you'd have to play a joke  
with different children every week  
because your friends were always – Eek! -

exploding, until one smart kid  
unplugged you from the power grid.  
And then you'd sleep for evermore  
your only sound, a robot snore.

So thank your lucky, lucky start  
and some small planets, that you are  
a kid of flesh and blood – and not  
a super-voltage kid robot.

## Hideout

by Desmond Egan

not for doubledecker Dublin  
would I swop our little river  
crossing under the road

the bridge where I sit with friends  
the sloping bank down  
under leaves to the big stone  
where the light is green

down there  
the sound of cars changes  
the way an ambulance does passing  
everything is a bit different  
the flicker of a trout  
on the water skin

the road of shadowy oaks  
makes the quiet quieter

once I ran away there  
and never came back

## Old Witch, Young Witch

by Mary O'Donnell

The witch up the road is busily cooking  
stirring the cauldron when no-one is looking.

The thick broth is bubbling with frog's legs and bats  
and glistening, I think, with the tail-ends of rats.

Our neighbour's not ugly, with warts on her nose,  
her smile is so sweet, you'd never suppose

that this is a witch, the vilest one ever.  
The thing is, you see, she's awfully clever.

She drives to the school gates every day,  
with kids of her own who never would say

that their Ma is a tyrant whose tricks are so vast,  
(their mouths buttoned shut by some spell she has cast).

She has charmed even them (not to mention the cat),  
to stick by her side and not say what she's at!

She offers some kids sweets of poisonous weeds,  
that change in our bellies to hard little beads.

She gives jolly parties, pretends to be nice,  
but cross her just once and your head's full of lice.

She knows that I know what she's at in the dark,  
Out on a broomstick, seeking her mark,

hovering close where the bonfires light,  
hunting low over fields for children at night.

But now that I'm growing I've spells of my own,  
I know how to stop her by holding two bones

from last Sunday's beef dinner, up to the moon  
where I cross them and murmur the words of my rune.

This is the season young witches are growing,  
learning the trade without OLD witches knowing!

## **The Recipe of Happiness**

by Grace Wells

The recipe for happiness in our house  
is to take a cup of flour,  
add milk, two eggs, a pinch of sale,  
and whisk for half an hour.

Then take the creamy mixture  
to the steaming frying pan,  
ladle little circles in,  
as many as you can.

Watch them all turn gold and brown,  
then sit down to eat,  
sugar and lemon on one side,  
pour maple syrup to complet.

## Van Gogh's Yellow Chair

by Mark Roper

I would love to sit  
in the yellow chair  
in the painting,

when a shadow lies  
like a shy animal  
in a corner

and the day's air  
is like water in which  
small noises swim

I would light my pipe  
and watch  
the blue smoke rise,

I would sit there  
safe from harm,  
safe from all surprise.

Beyond the frame  
on every side  
the outside world

would open wide  
but I'd have crossed  
the great divide.

Nothing could touch me  
if I sat there.  
I would live forever

so long as I never  
rose from  
that yellow chair.

## Lion King

by Joseph Woods

You've been watching the weather  
in your Grandad's face  
as he sleeps armchaired  
in the sitting room

and how the newspaper flopped  
to his feet like a seagull  
big with wings of newsprint.

Watching the weather in his face  
is more interesting than *The Lion King*  
and when he wakes from his snooze  
he always looks like a spaceman

landed on some strange planet  
but still manages a smile  
when you ask him, *Grandad*  
*were you old before you were old?*

## **Me in a Tree**

by Julie O'Callaghan

Unfortunately, it wasn't  
a luxury tree house  
with hot and cold running cocoa  
or with a robin

bringing me breakfast in bed.  
A squirrel didn't toss acorns  
at me when I needed to wake up.  
No – that wasn't how it was.

I hid high up in the leaves.  
So many thoughts were floating  
I speared them on to twigs  
to see them twinkle in the sun.

But now I realise  
I named this poem the wrong thing.  
It's not me in a tree.  
It's the tree in me.

## **The Rabbit**

by Frank Ormsby

hangs dead behind the door, hind legs strung,  
as never in life.  
No-one has closed its eyes.

Its lips wince back  
as though caught in the act  
of twitching a ticklish whisker.

What starts as drip  
ends as dried splash  
on the *Fermanagh Herald*.

More deeply dead by the hour,  
it will be sold  
to a man in a Morris Minor.

My father will wrap it tenderly  
in his jacket  
and smuggle it out to the car.

## **On Water**

by John O'Donnell

I'd seen it happen years ago, back when  
he was just a child; couldn't have been more  
than eight. I'd warned him: stay close to the shore,  
don't go deeper than your knees. But even then  
he had this way of doing what he thought was right.  
My back was turned – his baby sister, red-cheeked  
in the heat – and he was gone. I panicked;  
ran down to the edge, screamed his name in fright  
until I saw him, going out with the tide  
walking on water. Little splashes as  
he skipped from wave to wave; astonished fishes  
leaping out from underneath his feet. Arms stretched wide,  
he smiled back, showing how easily it was done.  
Which it was, compared with what was yet to come.

## **Bee-chasing**

by Nessa O'Mahony

You stalk  
eying montbretia flames  
levelling ferns ...

now stock-still  
tracking a bee's flight,  
waiting for the exact point  
in its trajectory  
to pounce,

the learned grace  
of an aerial acrobat  
claws  
arching  
as you complete  
a perfect somersault ...

and miss once more.

Outside  
a car brakes;  
ears flatten  
as you arrow back  
to safety.

## **In the Bakery**

by Gerard Smyth

I sliced the round fruit down to the core,  
a tight knuckle that tasted sour,  
Good hands lined with flour  
were creating something beautiful  
out of dough, beating it flat

'Silence Is Golden', someone sang on the old radio  
that used to fade and then come back.  
It was almost a biblical task -  
taking from the oven the abundance  
of the baker's dozen: soda farls, apple tarts,  
wheaten bread with a crust of thickness.

it was a place of sifting fingers  
and measuring vessels, of work  
that became a ritual when I filled and emptied the kiln  
or gathered up egg shells and apple skins.

## **Anto's Inferno**

by Rita Ann Higgins

It wasn't until our Anto  
got fourteen months  
for borrowing other people's cars  
from their driveways  
and making an inferno out of them  
so that he could show his uncles  
what a big man he was -  
then and only then did we realise  
what an insatiable appetite he had.

After he was lock-jawed  
in The Joy for a few months  
our house was like a banqueting hall  
with all that extra food.  
Going through that food  
was like a journey through hell  
heaven and purgatory.

Anto's friend, Liver Lips,  
called round one day  
to tell us on thing about Anto.  
- I'll tell you one thing about Anto,  
he has great taste, he never touched nothin'  
'cept Beamers and Mercs  
and if they hadn't alloy wheels  
there was no way he'd entertain them.  
He'd babysit the odd Saab,  
but only if she was a zero four job.

We miss Anto 'round the house;  
only the other mornin'  
before I did the shop  
I opened the fridge -  
there was enough frozen pizza in it  
to feed all Castle Park,  
untouched and no takers;  
they were just sittin' there  
like Beatrice, waitin' for the beck.

## **A Cigarette in an Ashtray**

by Matthew Geden

The bar-room clock hands have almost stopped  
caught between tick and tock, those partners in  
time. My life is in ashes. Wistfully I watch  
my grey soul slipping guiltily out; going to join  
the gathering clouds above. I have lain untouched

for some time, burning alone amongst the remains  
of former friends. No hand reaches out for me.  
Already I feel smaller, older and strangely  
short of breath. I miss the ordinary:

the flourish in the air, the regular kiss  
of warm puckered lips, the fire in my belly  
and the smell of you. My only wish,

as I watch another cigarette being lit,  
is that they find some sure for this ending of life.

Any minute now the bar-man will call, 'Time'.

## **Bully**

by Enda Wyley

You are a sharp pencil  
in my side during every class,  
a robber of all the homework I do,  
a smiling, sweet face to the teacher  
but a hissing, green-eyed demon to me.

You are cruel glass in the playground,  
a towering wall that blocks my way home.  
You push, kick, bruise, taunt, sneer, laugh  
at me – there is nowhere you won't find me.  
My nights and mornings have your cruel stare.

But there'll come a time when you'll fall down,  
when you'll cry out, when you'll be left alone.  
Then who will help you up, dry your eyes, brush  
dust from your knees, gently wash your cuts clean?  
Who will take your hand and walk home with you?

## His i's Were Empty

by Rita Ann Higgins

The only thing I liked  
about my father  
was his handwriting.

His n's were slender and mean,  
they had big city-never seen  
written all over them.

His r's were turned in secret-keepers  
they stole or owed nothing  
to chance or design.

His n's were nowhere now  
but they had travelled  
through continents  
of isolation and sting.

His m's were memorable,  
his mother was free,  
she died before she could  
wing him a lullaby.  
His m's now mine to take or leave  
I took a left and lost.

The spines of his k's  
were sentinel straight –  
once teddy-boy wise  
now corner-men lonely.  
The watchers of history  
the warmers of stone.

His g's were fractured and cross,  
snarling like the Leitir Móir mongrels  
at the cheating half-days of winter.

His eyes were empty,  
except for that gulf of longing  
that gaped around syllables,  
making contact a cavity  
language never reached.

## **Oops**

### **AFTER FREUD**

by Gerry Murphy

The old woman  
so small that, when I held  
the shop door open for her,  
she passed in easily  
under my arm.  
Somewhere in that split-second  
between the chivalrous act  
and the thought  
that the ungrateful cow  
might be treating me  
as a doorman,  
I released the heavy,  
tightly-sprung door.

I still hear the thump  
as it caught her  
in the small of her back.

## **I'm Not Stupid**

by Moyra Donaldson

Shouting rises  
above the sound of the TV,  
up through the ceiling, seeping  
between the floorboards of my room  
until I put my headphones on and tune it out,  
get homework done, despite my parents arguing.

Tomorrow they'll  
pretend it's all ok, tell me  
there's nothing to worry about,  
as if I'm just a kid and don't know  
what's happening, mum's eyes all red from crying,  
dad not talking and drinking too much and maybe leaving.

Do they think I'm stupid? That I don't know what's going on?

## **The Game**

by Fred Johnston

Sometimes it happened that you'd score a goal,  
then you'd get the cheer and slap on the back.  
Other times you'd miss or lose the ball or stumble  
your best mates called you 'Stupid Fenian'  
and you'd smile as a fist landed on your back.

You worked harder than the rest to find the wood  
or tyres or bits of hedge and dried-up branches -  
Bonfire Night arrived and you were out like a linty  
feeling the boney heat like a slap in the lug,  
reddening your cheeks as you fed it more branches.

You played the game and knew its every move,  
half a child yet and wiser that your years:  
Streets not to walk up alone, corners to avoid,  
still these half-mates stood by you in any foreign scrap,  
proudly their Fenian only, you'd remember that for years.

## Leaving for a Nursing Home

by Pádraig J Daly

She reaches a thin hand  
to clutch at mine:  
She is frail and frightened.

She must leave all that years  
have made familiar  
and go where she will lie at night

listening to the moans of strangers.  
No more dusting jugs and photographs,  
setting out cups,

filling at evening her hot water jar,  
putting the door on double lock,  
climbing the short stairs to her bedroom.

If a clock ticks, it will not be hers.  
If a phone rings in the night,  
it will be for some other.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Seven (Age 12 – 14)**

**Boys**

## **My Dog, He is an Ugly Dog**

By Jack Prelutsky

My dog, he is an ugly dog,  
he's put together wrong,  
his legs are much too short for him,  
his ears are much too long.  
My dog, he is a scruffy dog,  
he's missing clumps of hair,  
his face is quite ridiculous,  
his tail is scarcely there.

My dog, he is a dingy dog,  
his fur is full of fleas,  
he sometimes smells like dirty socks,  
he sometimes smells like cheese.  
My dog, he is a noisy dog,  
he's hardly ever still,  
he barks at almost anything,  
his voice is loud and shrill.

My dog, he is a stupid dog,  
his mind is slow and thick,  
he's never learned to catch a ball,  
he cannot fetch a stick.  
My dog, he is a greedy dog,  
he eats enough for three,  
his belly bulges to the ground,  
*he is the dog for me.*

## Watch Your French

By Kim Wright

When my Mum tipped a panful of red-hot fat  
Over her foot, she did quite a little chat,  
And I won't tell you what she said  
But it wasn't:  
*'Fancy that!*  
*I must try in future to be far more careful*  
*With this red-hot scalding fat!'*

When my Dad fell over and landed – splat! –  
With a trayful of drinks (*he'd tripped over the cat*)  
I won't tell you what he said  
But it wasn't:  
*'Fancy that!*  
*I must try in future to be far more careful*  
*To step **round** our splendid cat!'*

When Uncle Joe brought me a cowboy hat  
Back from the States, the dog stomped it flat,  
And I won't tell you what I said  
But Mum and Dad yelled:  
**'STOP THAT!**  
*Where did you learn that appalling language?*  
*Come on. Where?'*  
*'I've no idea,' I said,*  
*'No idea.'*

## **Rhinos Purple, Hippos Green**

By Michael Patrick Hearn

My sister says  
I shouldn't colour  
Rhinos purple,  
Hippos green.  
She says  
I shouldn't be so stupid;  
Those are things  
She's never seen.  
But I don't care  
What my sister says,  
I don't care  
at my sister's seen.  
I will colour  
What I want to -  
Rhinos purple,  
Hippos green.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Seven (Age 12 – 14)**

**Girls**

## Something Told the Wild Geese

By Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese  
    It was time to go.  
Though the fields lay golden  
    Something whispered - "*Snow*".  
Leaves were green and stirring,  
    Berries, luster-glossed,  
But beneath warm feathers  
    Something cautioned - "*Frost*".  
All the sagging orchards  
    Steamed with amber spice,  
But each wild beast stiffened  
    At remembered ice.  
Something told the wild geese  
    It was time to fly -  
Summer sun was on their wings,  
    Winter in their cry.

## Joan Who Hates Parties

By John Walsh

Today's little Doreen's party-day  
And it all begins when I'm snatched from play  
By Mother, who cries with a gay little laugh.  
*"Now come along first and have a nice bath!"*  
And off come my jeans and I'm dumped straight in,  
And splashed all over from toes to chin,  
Then dumped out again on the big bath-mat  
And don't I just hate that!

For the next half hour I am rubbed rough-dry  
And ticked with talc till I'm ready to cry,  
And perched half-dressed on a backless chair  
For the fight between mother and me and my hair,  
Then on go the shoes and the clean white socks,  
And the dreamiest of dream-like party frocks,  
With a sweet blue bow for the end of my plait,  
And don't I just hate that!

But I'm ready at last, at ten-past four  
I'll be dropped at dear Doreen's door;  
And at Doreen's door I'll be met with a hearty  
Welcome to dear little Doreen's party.  
But they won't see me ... they won't see Joan,  
But a girl with a heart, like a thunderstone.  
A girl with the face of a fierce Tom-Cat....  
And won't they just hate that!

## A LITTLE MISTAKE

By Anna M Pratt

I studied my tables over and over,  
And backward and forward too,  
But I couldn't remember six times nine,  
And I didn't know what to do;  
Till teacher told me to play with my doll  
And not to bother my head,  
*If you call her 'Fifty-four' for a while,  
You'll learn it by heart,* she said.

So I took my favourite Mary Ann,  
though I thought it a dreadful shame  
to give such a perfectly lovely child  
such a perfectly horrid name.  
And I called her *My dear little Fifty-Four*  
a hundred time – till I knew  
the answer to six times nine – as well  
as the answer to two times two.

Next day, Elizabeth Wigglesworth,  
who always acts so proud,  
said *Six times nine is fifty-two,*  
and I nearly laughed aloud!  
But I wished I hadn't when teacher said,  
*Now Dorothy, tell if you can.*  
For I thought of my doll, and oh dear me  
I answered – *Mary Ann!*

## **Grade Eight Poem Suggestions (Lyrics)**

# A Soft Day

By Winifred M. Letts

A soft day, thank God!  
A wind from the south  
With a honeyed mouth;  
A scent of drenching leaves,  
Briar and beech and lime,  
White elder-flower and thyme  
And the soaking grass smells sweet,  
Crushed by my two bare feet,  
While the rain drips,  
Drips, drips, drips from the eaves.

A soft day, thank God!  
The hills wear a shroud  
Of silver cloud;  
The web the spider weaves  
Is a glittering net;  
The woodland path is wet,  
And the soaking earth smells sweet  
Under my two bare feet,  
And the rain drips,  
Drips, drips, drips from the leaves.

# Something Told the Wild Geese

By Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese

It was time to go.

Though the fields lay golden

Something whispered - "*Snow*".

Leaves were green and stirring,

Berries, luster-glossed,

But beneath warm feathers

Something cautioned - "*Frost*".

All the sagging orchards

Steamed with amber spice,

But each wild beast stiffened

At remembered ice.

Something told the wild geese

It was time to fly –

Summer sun was on their wings,

Winter in their cry.

# MEETING

By Rachel Field

As I went home on the old wood road,  
    With my basket and lesson book,  
A deer came out of the tall trees  
    And down to drink at the brook.

Twilight was all about us,  
    Twilight and tree on tree;  
I looked straight into its great, strange eyes  
    And the deer looked back at me.

Beautiful, brown, and unafraid  
    Those eyes returned my stare,  
And something with neither sound nor name  
    Passed between us there.

Something I shall not forget;  
    Something still, and shy, and wise,  
In the dimness of the woods,  
    From a pair of gold-flecked eyes.

# Sounds of Spring

By P. Collins

Listen! Listen! What can you hear?  
Was it a mouse that came pattering near?  
Was it the wind that blew in the trees?  
Or flowers that swayed in the rustling breeze?

Was it a bird that flapped in the sky?  
Or was it a deer that went leaping by?  
Perhaps it was flowers blossoming near?  
Listen! Listen! What can you hear?

That was a squirrel scampering there,  
A fox goes by and skulks to his lair.  
That was a song of a calling bird.  
Those were the sounds of Spring we heard.

# 'Spring Song'

By John D. Sheridan

There is going to be a dance,  
I can feel it in the air –  
What kind of frock will the daffodil wear?  
Gold for the sun and green for the clover;  
Spring is on the way  
And the winter's nearly over.

A soft little wind  
Out behind the hill  
Is practicing tunes  
For the shy daffodil.  
He daren't start yet  
To play with all his might;  
He daren't start yet,  
For the time isn't right;  
He daren't start yet,  
For the frocks aren't made,  
And the fairy needles flash  
in the green forest glade.  
Green thread, gold thread, laughing all together –  
Heigh for the dance and the bright spring weather.

# *To a Child Dancing in the Wind*

By William Butler Yeats

Dance there upon the shore;  
What need have you to care  
For wind or water's roar?  
And tumble out your hair  
That the salt drops have wet;  
Being young you have not known  
The fool's triumph, nor yet  
Love lost as soon as won,  
Nor the best labourer dead  
And all the sheaves to bind.  
What need have you to dread  
The monstrous crying of wind?

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Eleven (Age 16 – 18)**

**Boys**

## **On first looking into Chapman's Homer**

By John Keats

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,  
    And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
    Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,  
    That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:  
    Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
    When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
    He stared at the Pacific – and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise –  
    Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

# **`REMEMBER'**

By Christina Rossetti

Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

## Evening on Calais Beach

By William Wordsworth

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
    The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
    Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea:  
    Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
    And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder – everlastingly.  
Dear Child! dear Girl! That walkest with me here,  
    If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought,  
    Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
    And worshipping'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
    God being with thee when we know it not.

# Sea

By Brendan Kennelly

I am patient, repetitive, multi-voiced,  
Yet few hear me  
And fewer still trouble to understand

Why, for example, I caress  
And hammer the land.  
I do not brag of my depths

Or my currents, I do not  
Boast of my moods or my colours  
Or my breath in your thought.

In time I surrender my drowned,  
My appetite speaks for itself,  
I could swallow all you have found

And open for more,  
My green tongues licking the shores  
Of the world

Like starved beasts reaching for men  
Who will not understand  
When I rage and roar

When I bellow and threaten  
I am obeying a law  
Observing a discipline.

This is the rhythm  
I live.  
This is the reason I move

In hunger and skill  
To give you the pick of my creatures.  
This is why I am willing to kill,

Chill every created nerve.  
You have made me a savage master  
Because I know how to serve.

## **Before the Beginning**

By Gareth Owen

Sometimes in dreams I imagine  
alone and unafraid  
I'm standing in the darkness  
when the first bright stars were made.

When the sun sprang out of the blackness  
and lit the world's first dawn  
when torrents of rock rained upwards  
and the mountains and seas were born.

And I'm there when the forests and meadows  
flowered for the very first time  
when eyeless legless creatures  
oozed upwards out of the slime.

But when I awake and read the books  
though they tell me more and more  
the one thing they never tell me  
is – what was there before....

## 'The Listeners'

By Walter de la Mare

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,  
    Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
    Of the forest's ferny floor:  
And a bird flew up out of the turret,  
    Above the Traveller's head:  
And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
    '*Is there anybody there*' he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
    No head from the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,  
    where he stood perplexed and still.  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
    That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
    To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair  
    That goes down to the empty hall,  
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken  
    By the lonely Traveller's call.  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
    Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
    'Neath the starred and leafy sky;  
For he suddenly smote on the door, even  
    Louder, and lifted his head:  
'*Tell them I came, and no one answered,*  
    That I kept my word,' he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,  
    Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house  
    From the one man left awake:  
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
    And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward,  
    When the plunging hoofs were gone.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Eleven (Age 16 – 18)**

**Girls**

## **VOICES**

By Louis Untermeyer

All day with anxious heart and wondering ear  
I listened to the city; heard the ground  
Echo with human thunder, and the sound  
Go reeling down the streets and disappear.  
The headlong hours, in their wild career,  
Shouted and sang until the world was drowned  
With babel-voices, each one more profound....  
All day it surged – but nothing could I hear.

That night the country never seemed so still;  
The trees and grasses spoke without a word  
To stars that brushed them with their silver wings.  
Together with the moon I climbed the hill,  
And, in the very heart of Silence, heard  
The speech and music of immortal things.

## **`If Thou Must Love Me'**

By Elizabeth Barrett Browning

IF THOU MUST LOVE ME, let it be for nought  
except for love's sake only. Do not say,  
*'I love her for her smile - her look - her way  
of speaking gently, -for a trick of thought  
that falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
a sense of pleasant ease on such a day. '* -  
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
be changed, or change for thee, - and love, so wrought  
may be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry, -  
A creature might forget to weep who bore  
thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

## 'On Westminster Bridge'

By William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair:

Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
a sight so touching in its majesty:

This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning: silent, bare.

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie

Open unto the fields, and to the sky.

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep

In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill:

N' er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !

The river glideth at his own sweet will:

Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;

And all that mighty heart is lying still!

## **A Farewell**

By A.R.D. Fairburn

What is there left to be said?  
There is nothing we can say.  
Nothing at all to be done, to undo the time of day.  
No words to make the Sun roll East, or raise the dead.

I loved you as I loved life.  
The hand I stretched out to you  
brought a new earth to view,  
returning like Noah's dove  
till I was quick with love,  
but time sharpens his knife.

Time smiles and whets his knife,  
and something has got to come out quickly, and be buried deep,  
not spoken or thought about or remembered, even in sleep.  
You must live.  
Get on with your life.

## **Figure in a Seascape**

By Alan Bold

I saw this tired old woman, on the beach  
picking stones, and I knew her,  
or thought I knew her.  
She looked back on her years of resignation,  
with a certain satisfaction.  
She had endured some of the stones heaped on her,  
She had refused to collapse under the weight of it all.  
She continued to pick stones.  
To feel them in her fingers, feel them in her bones.  
She stood still for a moment, looking at the waves,  
A ruin beside the sea.  
She stood there aware of how her past had become  
her present,  
White hair, tawny beach, clear skies,  
And that far away look in her eyes.

## 'The Sounds in the Evening'

By Eleanor Farjeon

The sounds in the evening  
Go all through the house,  
The click of the clock  
And the pick of the mouse,  
The footsteps of people  
Upon the top floor,  
The skirts of my mother  
That brush by my door,  
The crick in the boards,  
And the creak of the chairs,  
The fluttering murmurs  
Outside on the stairs,  
The ring at the bell,  
The arrival of guests,  
The laugh of my father  
At one of his jests,  
The clashing of dishes  
As dinner goes in,  
The babble of voices  
That distance makes thin,  
The mewing of cats  
that seem just by my ear,  
The hooting of owls  
That can never seem near,  
The queer little noises  
That no one explains –  
Till the moon through the slats  
Of my window-blind rains,  
And the world of my eyes  
and my ears melts like steam  
As I find in my pillow  
The world of my dream.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Twelve (Age 16 – 18)**

**Boys**

## **'A Man I Knew'**

By Brendan Kennelly

*'I want no easy grave', he said to me,  
'where those who hated me can come and stare,  
slip down upon a servile knee,  
muttering their phoney public prayer.  
In the wilds of Norfolk I'd like to lie,  
no commemorative stone, no sheltering trees,  
far from the hypocrite's tongue and eye,  
safe from the praise of my enemies.'*

A man I knew who seemed to me  
the epitome of chivalry  
was constantly misunderstood.  
The heart's dialogue with God  
was his life's theme and he  
explored its depths assiduously  
and without rest. Therefore he spat  
on every shoddy value that  
blinded men to their true destiny –  
the evil power of mediocrity,  
the safety of the barren pose,  
all that distorted natural grace.  
Which is to say, almost everything.  
Once he asked a girl to sing  
a medieval ballad. As her voice rang out,  
she was affronted by some interfering lout.

This man I knew spat in his face  
and wished him to the floor of hell.  
I thought then, and still think it well  
that man should wear the spittle of disgrace  
for violating certain laws.

Now I recall my friend because  
he lived according to his code  
and in his way was true to God.  
Courage he had and was content to be  
himself, whatever came his way.  
There is no other chivalry.

## **`Circus Lion Gives Evidence'**

By John Agard

At crack of whip  
I jumped through  
hoops of fire.  
And the people loved it.

All that clapping.  
All those lights  
just for me, a king  
who did as he was told.  
One day each clap became a roar  
that filled my ear.  
Each light fell  
like a moon on a forest floor.  
My mane flared  
with old remembrances  
till I was full of  
myself. Full of Lion.

Then, ladies and gentlemen,  
came the final trick.  
And you know the rest.  
At blast of trumpet  
he put his head into  
the kingdom of my mouth  
which I closed forever.

He was a good man, my trainer.

## 'The Song of Wandering Aengus'

By W. B. Yeats

I went out to the hazel wood,  
Because a fire was in my head,  
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,  
And hooked a berry to a thread;  
And when white moths were on the wing,  
And moth-like stars were flickering out,  
I dropped the berry in a stream  
And caught a little silver trout.

When I laid it on the floor  
I went to blow the fire aflame,  
But something rustled on the floor,  
And some one called me by my name.  
It had become a glimmering girl  
with apple blossom in her hair  
who called me by my name and ran  
and faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering  
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,  
I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
and pluck till time and times are done  
the silver apples of the moon,  
the golden apples of the sun.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Twelve (Age 16 – 18)**

**Girls**

## 'The Shell'

By James Stephens

And then I pressed the shell  
    Close to my ear  
And listened well,  
And straightway like a bell  
    Came low and clear  
The slow, sad murmur of far distant seas,  
Whipped by an icy breeze  
    Upon a shore  
Windswept and desolate,  
    It was a sunless strand that never bore  
The footprint of a man,  
    Nor felt the weight  
Since time began  
Of any human quality or stir  
Save what the dreary winds and waves incur.  
And in the hush of waters was the sound  
Of pebbles rolling round,  
For ever rolling with a hollow sound.  
And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go  
Swish to and fro  
their long, cold tentacles of slimy grey.  
There was no day,  
Nor ever came a night  
Setting the stars alight  
To wonder at the moon:  
Was twilight only and the frightened croon,  
Smitten to whimpers, of the dreary wind  
And waves that journeyed blind -  
And then I loosed my ear - oh, it was sweet  
To hear a cart go jolting down the street!

*(NOTE: word Straightway NOT Straightaway)*

## **'Falling Asleep'**

By Siegfried Sassoon

Voices moving about in the quiet house;  
Thud of feet and a muffled shutting of doors;  
Everyone yawning. Only the clocks are alert.  
Out in the night there's autumn-smelling gloom  
Crowded with whispering trees, across the park  
A hollow cry of hounds like lonely bells;  
And I know that the clouds are moving across the moon;  
The low, red, rising moon. Now herons call  
And wrangle by their pool; and hooting owls  
Sail from the wood above pale stooks of oats.

Waiting for sleep, I drift from thoughts like these;  
And where to-day was dream-like, build my dreams.  
Music ... there was a bright white room below,  
And someone singing a song about a soldier,  
One hour, two hours ago; and soon the song  
Will be 'last night'; but now the beauty swings  
Across my brain, ghost of remembered chords  
Which still can make such radiance in my dream  
That I can watch the marching of my soldiers,  
And count their faces; faces, sunlit faces.  
Falling asleep ... the herons, and the hounds ...  
September in the darkness; and the world  
I've known; all fading past me into peace.

## **'The Lizard'**

By Lydia Pender

Still is your delicate head,  
Like the head of an arrow;  
Still is your delicate throat,  
Rounded and narrow;  
Still is your delicate back,  
Patterned in silver and black,  
and bright with the burnished sheen that the gum-tips share;

Even your delicate feet  
Are still, still as the heat,  
with a stillness alive and awake, and intensely aware.  
Why do I catch my breath,  
held by your spell?  
Listening, waiting - for what?  
Will you not tell?  
More alive in your quiet than ever the locust can be,  
Shrilling his clamorous song from the shimmering tree;  
More alive in your motionless grace, as the slow minutes die,  
than the scurrying ants that go hurrying busily by.  
I know, if my shadow but fall by your feet on the stone,  
in the wink of an eye,  
Let me try -  
Ah!  
He's gone!

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Proficiency (Age 17 – 20)**

**Boys**

## **'The Night Marlowe Died'**

By Patricia Beer

Christopher Marlowe was a spy, it seems.  
His day of pleasure by the River Thames  
Should have brought him a handshake and a watch  
for faithful service. He had done as much  
For anyone who paid him and so had  
his three companions. They were really good.

In those days spying was expertly done.  
Informers took each other's washing in.  
Double agents cancelled themselves out.  
Spying had paid for all the wine and meat  
which filled the little room that day in Spring  
when Marlowe met a different reckoning.

He had been his usual snorting, railing  
blasphemous self, but loyal to his calling,  
As they all had to be, to live so well.  
He sang a noisy song before he fell,  
A dagger stuck in his eye after the feast  
As though the Cross had got to him at last.

They saw each other home after his death.  
The rats had tired, the streets were out of breath.  
Somewhere asleep, the top spymasters lay  
Unpicking webs that they had spun by day.  
Somewhere, across a park, a peacock's cries  
Bewailed the pointlessness of murdering spies.

## **`Mirror in February'**

By Thomas Kinsella

The day dawns with scent of must and rain,  
Of opened soil, dark trees, dry bedroom air.  
Under the fading lamp, half dressed - my brain  
Idling on some compulsive fantasy –  
I towel my shaven jaw and stop, and stare,  
Riveted by a dark exhausted eye,  
A dry downturning mouth.

It seems again that it is time to learn,  
In this untiring, crumbling place of growth  
To which, for the time being, I return.  
Now plainly in the mirror of my soul  
I read that I have looked my last on youth  
And little more; for they are not made whole  
That reach the age of Christ.

Below my window the awakening trees,  
Hacked clean for better bearing, stand defaced  
Suffering their brute necessities,  
And how should the flesh not quail that span for span  
Is mutilated more? In slow distaste  
I fold my towel with what grace I can,  
Not young and not renewable, but man.

**Suggested Poems for  
Irish Board of Speech and Drama  
Grade Examinations**

**Grade Proficiency (Age 17 – 20)**

**Girls**

## **'IN MERRION SQUARE'**

By Seamus O'Sullivan

On the well-scrubbed wide steps  
Of the great house  
In the soft Summer night  
She sits in joyous state,  
But still as any pilfering mouse,  
Her evening meal laid out meticulously:  
Four courses – meat and bread,  
Potatoes (cold) and on an old tin plate  
Kept wisely, to await  
The waning appetite,  
An orange glowing gold.  
The rest on paper dishes spread with care,  
And as she eats she bows, now here, now there,  
With gestures of an old  
Forgotten courtesy,  
Tempting invisible guests  
Out of the purple air,  
To share the feast, partake the glowing joy.  
O wise ones who pass by  
Tell, of your wisdom, tell  
Plain truth or paradox  
Is it not well  
With her alone, not lonely there?  
The dish of herbs where love is –  
The stalled ox?  
Loud guests, lit halls – or silent spirits of the air?

## Chaos on the Catwalk

By Brian Lee

The snakeskin hissed, "*I hate this show*"

The sharkskin said, "*I do too*".

The fox fur said, "*I concur,*

*I'm leaving how about you?*"

The clothes the crowd had been wearing

Cried out: "*Enough is enough,*

*We never wore human flesh*

*We can do without the stuff!*"

From the seats below the catwalk,

There was a sudden uproar,

As all the fur coats and skins

Rushed out the exit door.

"*Fashion stinks*", yelled a young lynx,

"*No matter what anyone thinks,*

*It's yucky and it stinks!!*

*YARBOO!*"

The last to leave was a kid glove,

It cried its way up the aisle,

Behind a tatty fur coat made from the skin of a goat,

And claws from an old crocodile.