

TOWNSVILLE EISTEDDFOD 2023 SET POEM

AGE 8

My Favourite Word by Lucia and James L Hymes, Jr

There is one word -
My favourite -
The very, very best.
It isn't No or Maybe.
It's Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, YES!

"Yes, yes, you may," and
"Yes of course," and
"Yes, please help yourself."
And when I want a piece of cake,
"Why yes. It's on the shelf."

Some candy? "Yes."
A cookie? "Yes."
A movie?
Yes, we'll go."

I love it when they say my word:
Yes, Yes, YES! (*Not* No.)

OR

My Friend Edward Cole by Tony Bradman

My friend Edward Cole says:
He's allowed to stay up til midnight.

But I don't believe him

My friend Edward Cole says:
He's got his very own television.

But I don't believe him.

My friend Edward Cole says:
He gets \$25 a week pocket money.

But I don't believe him.

My friend Edward Cole says:
His Dad's got a million dollars.

But I don't believe him.

My friend Edward Coles says:
He can do black belt karate.

But I don't believe him.

My friend Edward Cole says:
He's been in an alien spaceship.

But I don't believe him.

My friend Edward Cole says:
He's told so many lies today

His Mum won't let him out to play.

I believe him, I believe him!

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AGE 9

Messy Room by Shel Silverstein

Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
His underwear is hanging on the lamp.
His raincoat is there in the overstuffed chair,
And the chair is becoming quite mucky and damp.
His workbook is wedged in the window,
His sweater's been thrown on the floor.
His scarf and one ski are beneath the TV,
And his pants have been carelessly hung on the door.
His books are all jammed in the closet,
His vest has been left in the hall.
A lizard named Ed is asleep in his bed,
And his smelly old sock has been stuck to the wall.
Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
Donald or Robert or Willie or—
Huh? You say it's mine? Oh, dear,
I knew it looked familiar!

OR

The Kite by Harry Behn

How bright on the blue
Is a kite when it's new!

With a dive and a dip
It snaps its tail

Then soars like a ship
With only a sail

As over tides
Of wind it rides,

Climbs to the crest
Of a gust and pulls,

Then seems to rest
As wind falls.

When string goes slack
You wind it back

And run until
A new breeze blows

And its wings fill
And up it goes!

How bright on the blue
Is a kite when it's new!

But a raggeder thing
You never will see

When it flaps on a string
In the top of a tree

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AGE 10

Watch Your French by Kit 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 bought 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?"

"I've no idea," I said,

"No idea."

OR

Cat Being Cat by Libby Hathorn

Cat in swirls
Of blankets
Moulds on folds
of sheets
Sleeps on heaps
of clothing
Yowls at pals
in streets

Curls
Uncurls
Elastic
Fantastic
Cat being cat!

Waits
on gates
Tenses
on fences
Climbs
on vines
Scrounges
on lounges
Yawns
on lawns
Naps
on laps

Curls
Uncurls
Elastic
Fantastic.

How about that
Cat being cat!

The Web by Joyce Trickett

Today I saw a thing of matchless wonder,
More beautiful than music, more frightening than thunder,
Skilful beyond the foolish to believe,
I stayed to watch a long-legged spider weave
A web so delicate, so strong, so fine –
Yet deadly in its intricate design.
He spun and swung and wove, for five whole hours
His citadel among the garden flowers,
From his own body came the endless thread
On which his weight he surely plummeted;
Firstly the straight bisection high to low,
Then fanned an upward arc and planned it so
With such completeness that a careless fly
Was captured in the first frail radii,
Was packeted and pierced and mesmerised
And sung to silent sleep, anaesthetized
Before it had the chance to be surprised.
And if a straying, wind tossed leaf the pattern broke
This clever weaver mended fast each silken spoke –
Lacing and interlacing old with new,
And all the while the centre stronger grew,
Until at last this lovely, circled snare,
Rhythmed and perfect hung against the air,
Invisible to flitting moth or roving bee,
A symmetry of silver mesh – strange enemy,
And then the spider slept content;
And I, who saw, may count the hours well spent.

OR

Teacher Said by Judith Nicholls

You can use
mumbled and muttered
groaned, grumbled and uttered
professed, droned or stuttered
...but *don't* use SAID!

You can use
rant or recite
yell, yodel or snort,
bellow, murmur, moan,
you can grunt or just groan
...but *don't* use SAID!

You can
hum, howl or hail
scream, screech, shriek or bawl,
squeak, snivel or squeal
with a blood-curdling wail
...but *don't* use SAID!
...SAID my teacher.

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AGE 12

Making Rainbows by Michael Rosen

I've got a friend who says
he can make rainbows
and Keith says:
"Yeah, sure. What do you mean?
Are you saying you can *paint* rainbows?"

"No," he says,
"I can make rainbows."

And Keith says,
"Yeah, sure. What do you mean?
Are you saying you *dream* you make rainbows?"

"No," he says,
"I can make rainbows."

He took us out into his back yard
and filled up a watering can
he looked to see where the sun was coming from
he poured out some water
in a big wide spray.
We looked.
He was right.
There was a rainbow.

"See," he said.
"I can make rainbows."

And Keith said,
"That's not a rainbow, is it?
Not a rainbow that goes right across the sky
in the rain."
And we said,
"Shut up Keith."

The Magpie by Colin Thiele

When the ridges stood out of the shadow
And the sky was a golden gong
The magpie swayed on the tree-top
And filled his throat with song.

When the morning was brisk as a dew-drop
And the clouds were riding high,
The magpie rose from the gum-tree
And side-slipped down the sky.

When the brown crops danced at midday
Arm-in-arm with the quivering heat,
His claw marks showed where the magpie
Had scattered the farmer's wheat.

And anger burnt right in the farmer,
Bright as the glancing sun
That came from the west and settled
On the steel of the farmer's gun.

And so now the air is empty
And the world at dawn is wrong,
For no magpie stands on the tree-top.
And fills his throat with song.

OR

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AGE 13

The Way Through the Woods by Rudyard Kipling

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath,
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.
Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few.)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods.
But there is no road through the woods.

My Dog by Vernon Scannell

My dog belongs to no known breed,
A bit of this and that.
His head looks like a small haystack;
He's lazy, smelly, fat.
If I say, 'Sit!' he walks away.
When I throw stick or ball
He flops down in the grass as if
He had no legs at all.
Then looks at me with eyes that say,
'You threw the thing, not me.
You want it back? Then get it back.
Fair's fair, you must agree.
He is a thief. Last week but one
He stole the Sunday roast
And showed no guilt at all as we
Sat down to beans on toast.
My loyal brave companion flew
Like a missile to the gate
And didn't stop till safely home.
He left me to my fate.
And would I swap him for a dog
Obedient, clean and good,
An honest, faithful, lively chap?
Oh boy, I would, I would!

OR

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AGE 14

The Cane by Allan Ahlberg

The teacher
had some thin springy sticks
for making kites.

Reminds me
of the old days, he said;
and swished one.

The children
near his desk laughed nervously,
and pushed closer.

A cheeky girl
held out her cheeky hand.
Go on, Sir!

Said her friends.
Give her the stick, she's always
playing up!

The teacher
paused, then did as he was told.
Just a tap.

Oh, Sir!
We're going to tell on you,
the children said.

Other children
left their seats and crowded round
the teacher's desk.

Other hands
went out. Making kites was soon
forgotten.

My turn next!
He's had one go already!
That's not fair!

Soon the teacher,
to save himself from the crush,
called a halt.

(It was
either that or use the cane
for real.)

Reluctantly,
the children did as they were told
and sat down.

If you behave
yourselves, the teacher said,
I'll cane you later.

OR

The Eyes Have It by Robert Cormier

I emerged from Dr Sampson's office,
("The Eyes Have It")
blinking into the sunlight,
and suddenly everything
had sharp edges,
the corners of buildings,
a leaf tumbling
from the maple in Monument Park.
The glasses,
with steel frames,
were a strange weight on my nose.
A world suddenly vivid,
people's faces across the street
no longer blurs.

I saw the red spider webs
in the cheeks
of the cop directing traffic,
looked up to see
white clouds
clearly outlined
as if pasted on a page
in a child's colouring book.
And looked down to see
cracks of lightning
frozen in the sidewalk,
a shard of green glass
from a broken bottle
gleaming like a distant planet
fallen into the gutter.

Reeling as if drunk
on Uncle Phillipe's home brewed beer,
I knelt down to watch
a glistening ant
at the kerb's rim
and in my glorious generosity,
my state of grace,
did not squash it underfoot,
the world too sweet
and brightly lit
for anything,
even an ant,
to die today.

The glasses were a miracle,
bringing the sweet
gift of sight
until,
in front of Laurier's Drug Store,
Ernie Forcier
placed his hands on his hips
and yelled to me
across the street:
"Hey, Four-eyes."

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Age 15

Growing Apples by Michael Rosen

And the King said,
"How do I turn this apple
into thousands of apples?"

The wise men scratched their heads,
muttered amongst themselves
and consulted their great books.

One stepped forward,
"Perhaps this is some kind of joke,
your majesty;
but could one say
that one could make
a thousand apples
by chopping one apple into a thousand pieces?"

"Balderdash!" said the King
"I said thousands of apples
and not some nonsensical business
about hacking an apple to bits."

Another wise man stepped forward.
"I have heard that beyond the horizon
there lives a man
who sings to objects in his house
it is said of him
that he can cause things to multiply.
Maybe - "

"Poppycock!" roared the King,
I wasn't looking for some holy-moly jiggery-pokery."
And on it went.

None of the wise men
were wise enough to solve the problem.

A serving girl
who was pouring the wine
caught the drift of what was going on.

"I know how to turn your apple
into thousands of apples," she said.

How the wise men laughed!

"The cheek!
A little whipper snapper like her!
As if she'd know!"

"Come then," said the King,
"Speak girl!"

"I would bury your apple."
Said the girl.

There was silence.

The wise men looked at each other
and sniggered.

"Bury it? Bury it?
What good would that do?"

But the King didn't wait.
"You're right, young lady.
Completely and utterly right."

OR

Parrots by Judith Wright

Loquats are cold as winter suns.

Among rough leaves their clusters glow
like oval beads of cloudy amber,
or small fat flames of birthday candles.

Parrots, when the winter dwindles
their forest fruits and seeds, remember
where the swelling loquats grow,
how chill and sweet their thin juice runs,

and shivering in the morning cold
we draw the curtains back and see
the lovely greed of their descending,
the lilt of flight that blurs their glories,

and warm our eyes upon the lories
and the rainbow-parrots landing.
There's not a fruit on any tree
to match their crimson, green and gold.

To see them cling and sip and sway,
loquats are no great price to pay.

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CHAMPIONSHIP AGE 15-18

In the Swamp Now by Harley Matthews

They are surveying the swamp now, the surveyors,
Mapping its shores to minute and degree,
Reckoning its expanse by link and chain.
Each motion puzzles a reflective tree,
Troubles the cloud-deeps.

 You are right, blue crane.

Flap up, and off, and find
Among some she oaks standing more securely
Yourself there beneath you again,
Oh, do not look behind.
The sky out there, the trees here, they will drain
Them altogether into a nowhere surely.

Go, it will all go. The ducks, that man
Wading towards them with a bush, his gun's
Report, the boy ship cracking home the cows,
The women cooeing them over the rise,
With none to remember it was that way once.

There is a plan
Drawn with straight-edge and square,
Decreed by a brain somewhere.
Not one inch it allows
For earth's designs or water's fantasies.

And songs? Its alphabet could never spell
One syllable
Of the frogs poem at midnight, or the paean
Of silence after. Instead
Will rise masses and crashes of steel and stone
Shaped to one end, all else inhibited.
The grass that might persist, come drought, come rain,

Must grow precise. Trees, houses all conform,
Men too must find a norm
To become man,

The individual perish, save the one
Who follows in the wake of the blue crane.