

Edward Cawston Thomas Poetry Competition 2020 winning poems

The winning poems have now been announced by our judge, Jane Draycott. Her report will follow at the end of February. There were over 300 poems entered and we thank every entrant for their interest.

The winning poem is 'The Reader' by Sue Davies.

The Reader

November 2019

Harrison Road Primary School, Fareham.

It is peaceful here...

through the tall school window copper oaks
orchestrate the wind.

I listen to their low
percussion of shaken leaves.

Bat boxes are now exposed
nailed to trunks already wounded
and scored.

Bethany comes with a book
her hair tousled, and climbs the chair.

I try small talk but her mind is set
to find her place and shy voice.

Her finger brushes every word
her legs scissoring to cadences

and rhythms of distant feet
marching through flak and mist.

I think of a wren
with a song

so strong
it can send off
the hawk and falcon.

Suddenly Bethany stops...

pins *gently* down by its tail
I love that word, she says and leans into me.

When *gently* lifts from her breath it flutters
over stippled meadow of sun-shot poppies

their heavy seed heads turn in the wind.

The joint second prizes go to Elena Croitoru for her poem. 'Playground'

Playground

We grew up in our spare time,
beyond a tower block island
where pearly cement dust lay
over the nerves of nettle and bindweed leaves
which clung to the fractured pale soil.

In winter, we would sink up to our chests
in snow and hide inside the unfinished body of a building,
its graffiti erased before it was written,
its three windowless walls wrapped around us
in an embrace that always stayed the same.

The place was empty, save for bone
fragments and jagged necks of green bottles.
We pretended this was a furnished room we owned
and thought God could not help us all
until later, and that when our turn came
we had to remember what we wanted.

We leaned against the concrete
which drained our body heat
through woollen clothes a size too small
until we could no longer bend our knees.

From this place we could not hear
the TV announcements that told us how
to love our republic, but we listened
to our silenced town and waited
to see if somebody could miss us.

and to Jo Peters for her poem 'snowfall'

snowfall

there's

something old-fashioned

about snow

a strange light

an odd quiet

we wake to a world
 returned to childhood's
black and white
 go out
where flighty pieces
 of sky
dawdle down
 chilly dithering
patiently
 a flake at a time
spread smooth
 altar cloth
alter
 soften edges
 of wall and path
blossom
 on black branches

we look out
 as that child did
 wild
with white excitement
 when stout snowmen grew
and we scooped snow
 scrunched it
 with sopping gloves
and threw
 and threw

so children
when your great
grandchildren ask you
what was it like
snow
you can show them this
but they still won't
know

Poems by

James Driver, Peter Challis, Karin van Heerden, Laura Potts, Virginia Astley and Wendy Manning
were all Highly Commended.