

WE ALL SLEEP  
UNDER THE SAME  
STARS

ILLUSTRATED  
POEMS BY YEAR 6 PUPILS  
OF  
GREENFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL  
STOURBRIDGE  
THAT  
DEMONSTRATE THE POWER  
OF  
EMPATHY



## **We All Sleep Under The Same Stars**

### **About The Letterpress Project**

At The Letterpress Project we believe that there is something very special about reading books. Holding them in your hands, turning the pages, catching the smell of paper old and new, marveling at the skills of the illustrator and letting the weight of all those pages settle in your hand or on your lap – it's an invitation to a journey that can take you anywhere.

We think that books are a gateway to ideas and adventures that expand our understanding of the world and ourselves. All reading can do that but nothing does it better than the collation of paper and ink bound between two covers that, when you open it, transforms into a relationship between you and the author.

The Letterpress Project is a not-for-profit initiative. The project's constitution and details of the Management Committee can be found on our website:

[www.letterpressproject.co.uk/about/what-we-do](http://www.letterpressproject.co.uk/about/what-we-do)

### **Acknowledgments**

The Letterpress Project would like to thank all the children and the staff at Greenfield Primary School who took to this project with enthusiasm and creativity and of course empathy and thanks also to the authors and others who made such positive comments on the poems.

We would also like to thank the members of the project management committee who have given advice and support and thanks in particular to Brian Homer, Senior Consultant at Homer Agency, who has made a vital contribution to the design and production of this publication.

And special thanks to Chris Riddell for the cover drawing.

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THE  
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CHRIS  
RIDDELL

## **Introduction**

The benefits of losing yourself in a world of stories are so significant that it would be foolish to ignore them. At Greenfield we believe reading for enjoyment is essential, so we all try to make reading and books as exciting and attractive as possible by using a variety of approaches. We place high quality texts at the heart of our cross-curricular topics and use the very best writing to inspire our children and encourage their development in literacy.



All our classes are named after significant people, including authors. Children who read for pleasure have enhanced levels of comprehension, an increased knowledge of grammar and show improvement in their writing. The ability to read well and appreciate books not only helps our children to do well in their learning but also offers other important, lifelong benefits. These include a richer vocabulary, the pleasure of reading in later life, improved general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures, people and places.

We also value the love of books and the celebration of stories. We came to hear of Karen Argent and the Letterpress Project through one of our parents, Ali Ciasullo, a student at Newman University and whose son Jack is in Year 6. I rang Karen and during our telephone conversation we soon discovered that we shared a passionate belief in the importance of children getting their hands on and then getting into a good book. In January, Karen joined our Year 6 pupils and their teachers, Miss Phillipa Cook and Miss Cynthia Tang, using books to explore the theme of asylum seekers and refugees.

This led to all our Year 6 boys and girls working in mixed pairs to compose these poems which generated considerable interest when they were posted on the Letterpress website. The children were really shocked to receive compliments on their writing from many children's authors including Chris Riddell, the Children's Laureate, and they couldn't believe it when he actually drew a poster to accompany their poetry! The children's work also attract attention in the Council of Europe and went on to receive positive comments from all over the world.

The children are very excited about this unique poetry book and genuinely surprised by and very proud of the attention their writing has attracted. Ruby in Year 6 neatly summed up the children's reaction: 'I can't quite believe it. It was just another normal writing lesson on a Friday morning.'

Exposure to excellent writing on topical themes combined with empathetic discussion and outstanding teaching has inspired our Greenfield children to produce this superb, thought-provoking creative collection, which reveals the honest insight of innocence and has the power to move people.

**Peter Bravo**

Headteacher Greenfield Primary School

*'Everyone can grow in a Greenfield'*



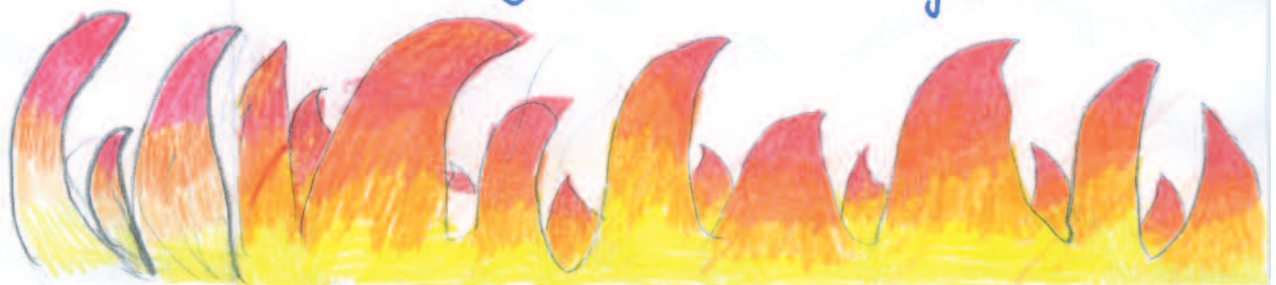
Refugee poem

I Woke up to crashing outside,  
dragons had destroyed our town,  
darkness invaded my life,  
the tree which once stood tall was a  
lump of ash,  
Our houses were gone,  
our only choice was to run.

We quickly rushed into the car,  
but father didn't make it,  
we couldn't stop to look,  
we had to carry on,  
we had to get to safety.

We arrived at the dock,  
we got onto a boat,  
it didn't look very safe but,  
it was our only hope,  
we set off for a new country and  
a start of a new life.

By Ellie and Morgan



5am.

5am.

Sound of fright baffled me,  
Petrified citizens fled from the country with fear,  
Anxiety gripped my throat,  
Bombs were scattered everywhere,  
This was for sure a nightmare.

Smoke made me gag,  
I was packing my school bag,  
We headed out of the door,  
Pressure of bombs had us to the floor,

Deadly missiles were launched into the sea,  
Just about missing my mother and me,  
Isolation trembled right beside us,  
We ran for our lives to catch a bus.

By Zain and Eve.





Refugee Poem

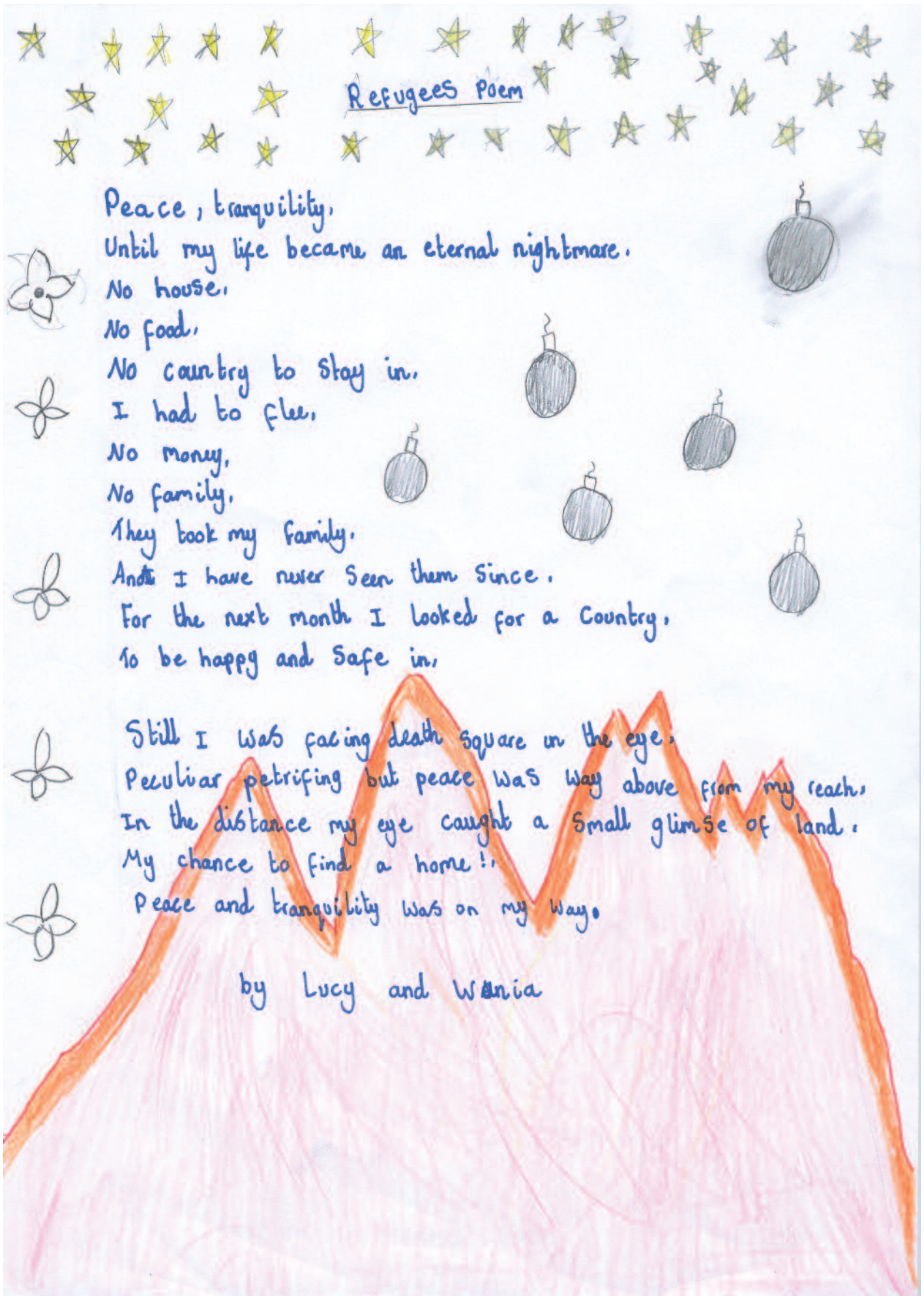
Peace and tranquility,  
everything's calm,  
until one day,  
my life came crashing down,  
bombs rained down,  
terror stalked my world,  
darkness gloomed my world.

We decided to flee,  
out of our once loving home,  
we got onto boats,  
crowded with people,  
we jumped onto lorries,  
travelled day and night,  
the boat toppled over,  
we were kicked off the lorry,  
we were dropping like flies,  
death still stalked me.

We eventually arrived at a strange country,  
far away from the war,  
I could now live my life,  
we had a new home,  
the only thing that remained,  
peace and tranquility.

By Sophie and Charley.





Refugees Poem

Peace, tranquility,  
Until my life became an eternal nightmare.  
No house,  
No food,  
No country to stay in,  
I had to flee,  
No money,  
No family,  
They took my family,  
And I have never seen them since.  
For the next month I looked for a country,  
to be happy and safe in,

Still I was facing death square in the eye,  
Peculiar petrifying but peace was way above from my reach,  
In the distance my eye caught a small glimpse of land,  
My chance to find a home!  
Peace and tranquility was on my way.

by Lucy and Wania



Refugee Poem



Peace, tranquility,  
War took everything,  
Bombs exploded,  
Sweeping away the life I knew,  
Dragons filled the world,  
I used to know.



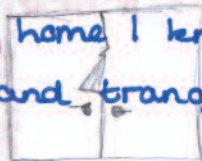
Death,  
It took my parents,  
Then devoured them.



I decided to run,  
The wind howled,  
And I howled for my parents.



I managed to get to an escape boat,  
As I floated away in my escape boat,  
I noticed the world I left behind,  
Demons and dragons raided,  
The only home I knew,  
Peace and tranquility had gone.



Written by: Maddison and George

## Refugees

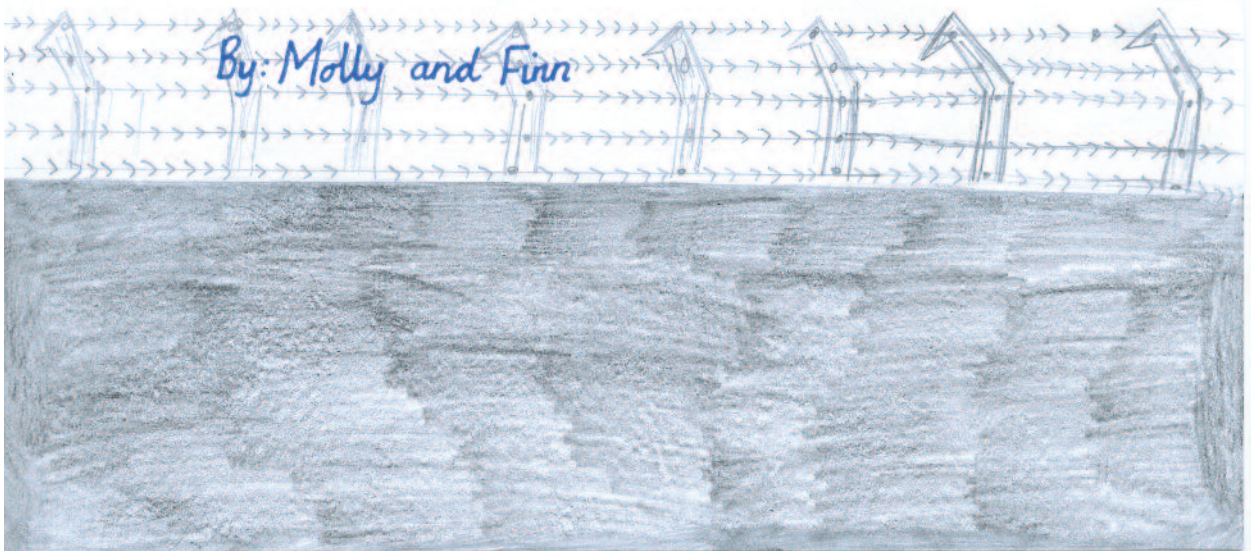
Fear of death,  
Gripped my throat,  
I then decided I needed a boat,  
Collided I did with foreign folk,  
Lent me a wooden boat.

Bombs and missiles set fire to the sea,  
It was too risky,  
I needed a lorry.

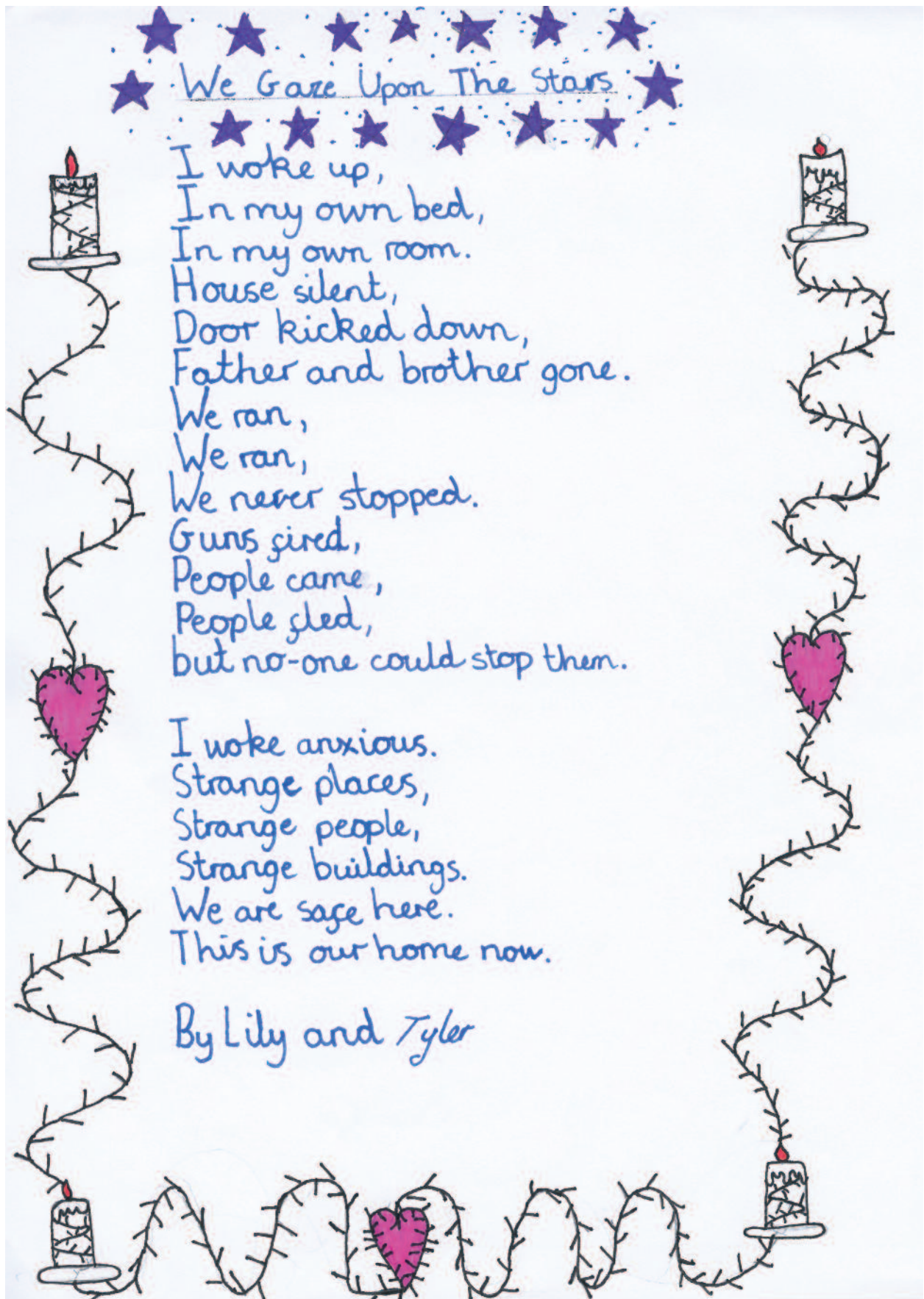
No one knowing,  
No one caring,  
I needed to see my family.

Night skies,  
All was gloomy,  
As I started to flee,  
Fear of death caught up with me.

By: Molly and Finn









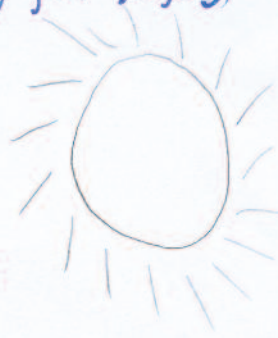
## Refugee Poem

Safe and secure,  
Peace and tranquility,  
Distracted by my amusement,  
My parents protect me from the dreadful news  
yet to come.

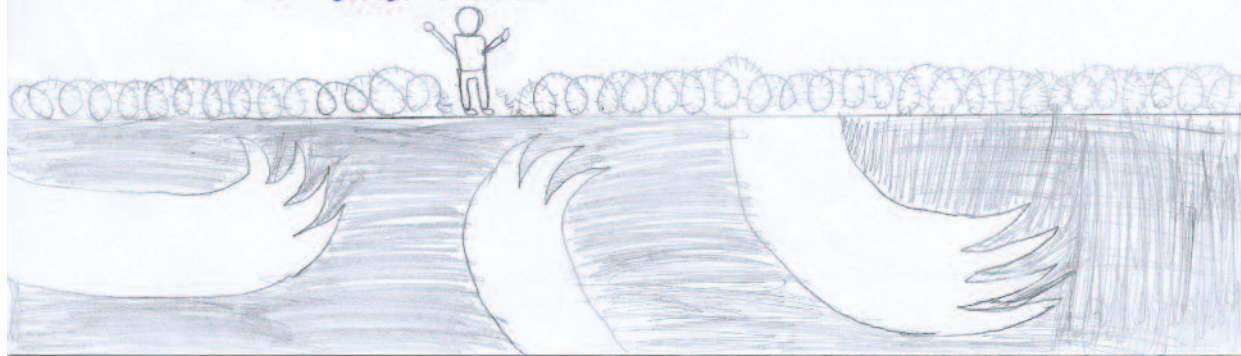
Lights flicker out,  
Plunging us all into darkness.  
If life were to deal a different hand,  
We wouldn't be at the wrong end of the tunnel.

Shadows chase us where ever we go,  
In this dreadful place we long for safety,  
and find a different home,  
In a different country.

We live here,  
longing to be safe and secure,  
no more secrets,  
no more shadows anymore.



Jack and Emma



## When Danger Came Knocking

Dazed at the world around us,  
alone in this great big world.

Fled for freedom,  
fled for safety,  
but now just missing home.

My house once stood there,  
full of laughter and cheer.

What is it now?

I dread to think,  
if I do I fill with fear.

Monsters came one morning,  
fear struck my home.

Danger came knocking,  
knocking at every house.

The devil now owns everything,  
everything, everyone, every life!

How can I live my life,  
being threatened by a knife?

Mum sat me down and said,  
"We have to go right now,"

or our lives will be controlled  
by the puppet master himself.

By Ruby and Charlie









Refugee Poem

Harmony,  
War struck,  
Our lives began to fade,  
The bombs were dinosaurs roaring with  
power,  
My community,  
Looking death square in the eye.

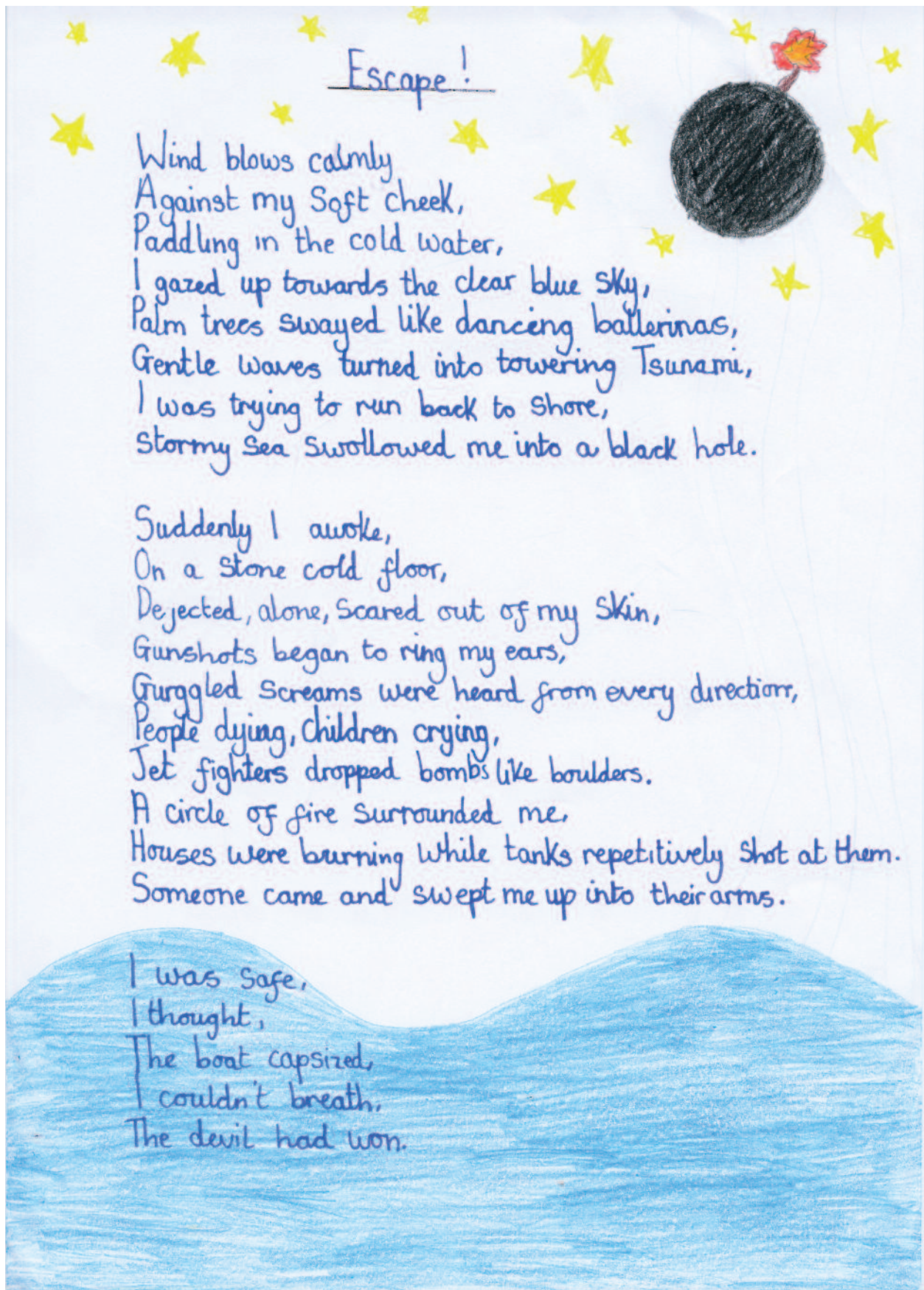
What do I do?  
Run,  
Run for my life,  
The devil danced in its glory,  
The buildings hid for safety,  
War took my Dad.

Travelling,  
Travelling for miles,  
My feet aching and swollen,  
Until finally I reached somewhere,  
Unfamiliar but peaceful,  
I was waiting for acceptance.

We all sleep under the same stars.

By Madeline and Jack





Escape!

Wind blows calmly  
Against my Soft cheek,  
Paddling in the cold water,  
I gazed up towards the clear blue sky,  
Palm trees swayed like dancing ballerinas,  
Gentle waves turned into towering Tsunami,  
I was trying to run back to shore,  
Stormy sea swallowed me into a black hole.

Suddenly I awoke,  
On a stone cold floor,  
Dejected, alone, scared out of my skin,  
Gunshots began to ring my ears,  
Gurgled screams were heard from every direction,  
People dying, children crying,  
Jet fighters dropped bombs like boulders.  
A circle of fire surrounded me,  
Houses were burning while tanks repetitively shot at them.  
Someone came and swept me up into their arms.

I was safe,  
I thought,  
The boat capsized,  
I couldn't breathe,  
The devil had won.



I opened my eyes,  
Wind blows calmly,  
Against my soft cheek  
Paddling in the cold water  
I was with my new family  
Although I will never forget the scarlet red blood.

By Annaliese K-G and Harley M





## Refugees

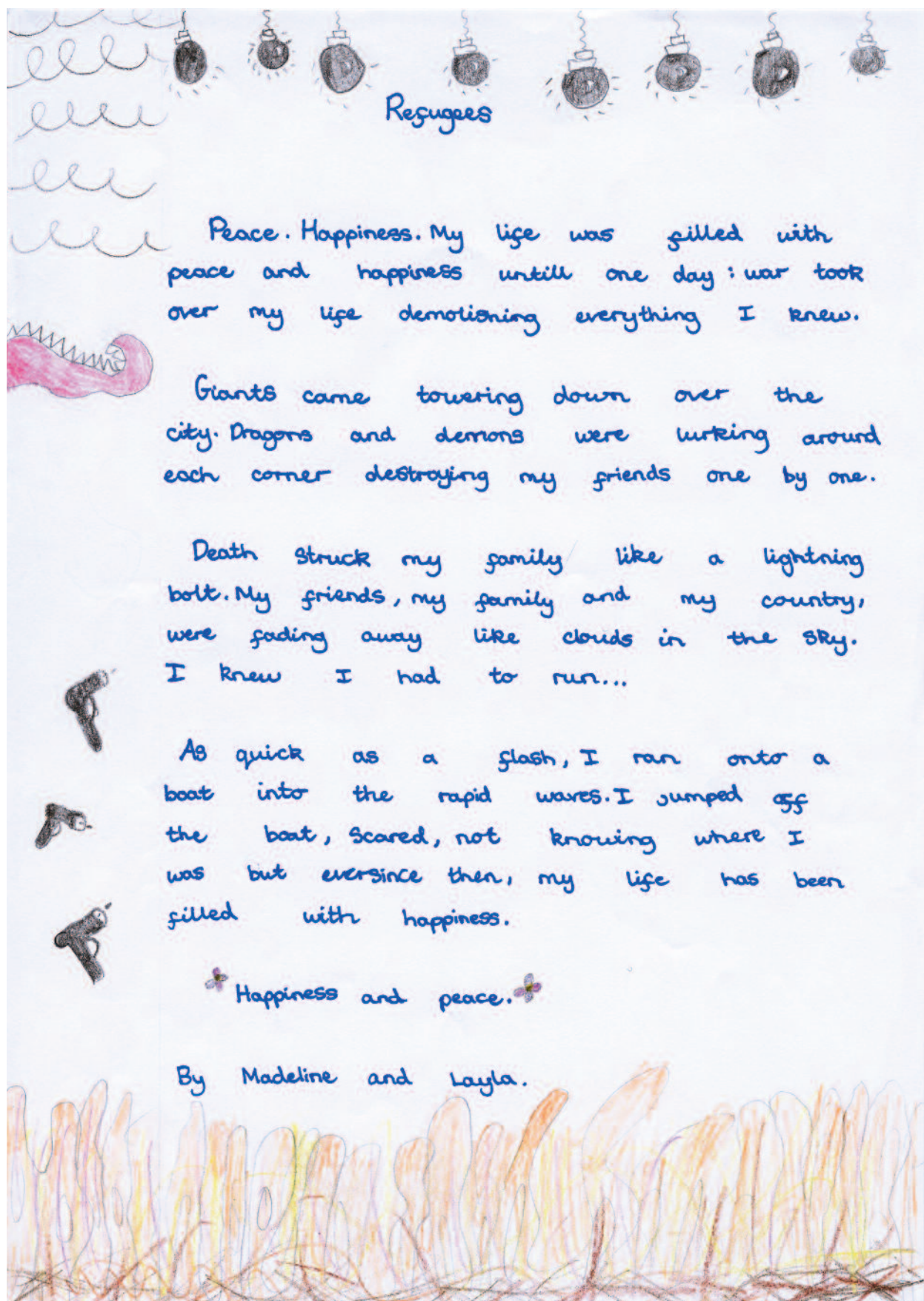


Peace, tranquility,  
Until war destroyed my life,  
Bombs hit the ground, demolishing the  
country I loved,  
The happiness was sucked out of  
my life,  
Replaced with an endless darkness,  
It took everything I knew that existed,  
It took my family,  
It took my home,  
It took my precious possessions,  
I didn't want it to take me,  
Was this how it was going to end?  
But,  
I got away,  
Escaped to another country,  
And once again it was,  
Peace, tranquility



By Clem and Kyle





## Refugees

Peace. Happiness. My life was filled with peace and happiness until one day: war took over my life demolishing everything I knew.

Giants came towering down over the city. Dragons and demons were lurking around each corner destroying my friends one by one.

Death struck my family like a lightning bolt. My friends, my family and my country, were fading away like clouds in the sky. I knew I had to run...

As quick as a flash, I ran onto a boat into the rapid waves. I jumped off the boat, scared, not knowing where I was but ever since then, my life has been filled with happiness.

✿ Happiness and peace. ✿

By Madeline and Layla.



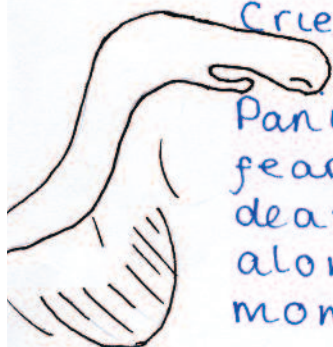
## Run



Peace,  
You wander about, lost in the crowd  
not knowing that clouds of evil,  
would smother us and choke us,  
making souls perish.



Silence,  
house of silence and worry,  
cold damp walls blocking all life,  
cries echo and bounce around



Panic,  
fear arises in the city,  
death swallows you and trails  
along beside you,  
monsters have come



Fear,  
screams rise through the city,  
guns fire,  
loved ones go down.  
no where is safe.

---

Hiding,  
hiding in the basement,  
shells whistle through the air,  
lives shatter,  
people distraught,  
no more secrets,







Flashback

We've lived here forever,  
We've had such good times,  
Laughs and giggles,  
Hopes and lies.

Until the war started,  
We were forced here,  
No food, no drink,  
No laughs, no cheer.

Bombs were falling,  
No one seemed to care,  
The sight was so bad,  
It was worse than a nightmare.

Then I heard screams,  
And death haunted me,  
Missiles and bombs,  
Set fire to the sea.

Now I am here,  
With my hope candle lit,  
But I will never forget,  
The green army kit.

By Martha and Jack




Refugee





Peace, tranquility,  
Until the war took everything away from me,  
Demons stampeded down the street, killing everyone in  
their path,  
Bombs crashed down like never before,  
Then I ran,  
I ran as fast as I could,  
My family weren't with me as death had  
overcome them,  
I got onto one of the escape boats,  
We floated away from the world I knew,  
Peace and tranquility,  
For now.




















By Noah and Maisie



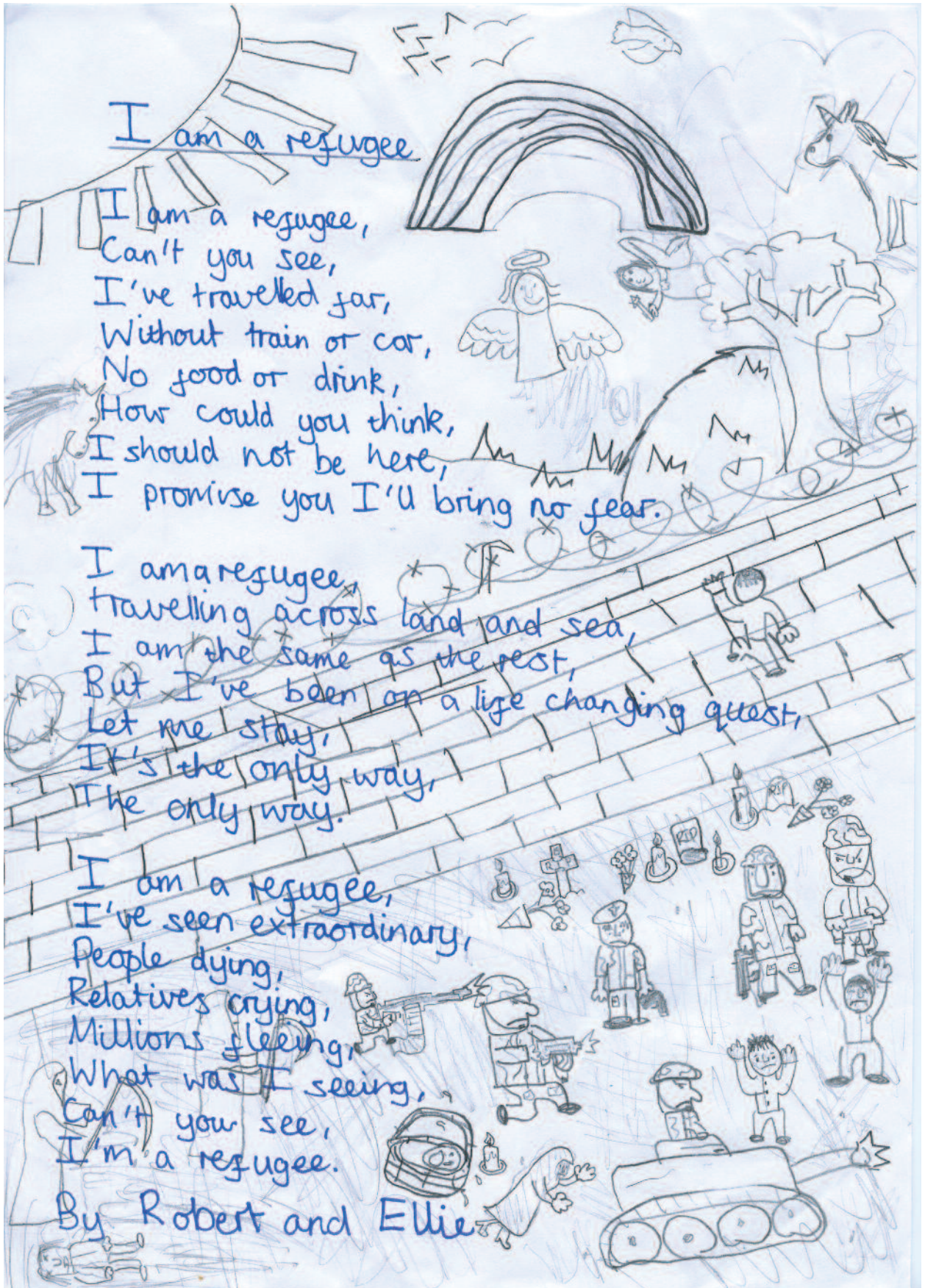




  
Refugee Poem

Wars are invaded my life,   
Demons lurked at every corner,  
Killing anyone who came in sight,  
Bombs came in like dragons,  
Destroying everything I'd ever known,  
One day death took my parents,  
Devouring them up into the black hole  
of torture,   
I made the decision to run,   
I took my little brother with me,  
Taking our chances in the wild,  
We headed for Europe, hoping they  
were warm and welcoming people,  
The journey was torturing remembering  
the day my parents died,  
One day we finally arrived in Europe,  
Peace and tranquility,   
That's all I could remember,   
We were welcomed with a warm  
heart,  
Given a home to stay in,   
Food to eat,   
Water to drink,   
That's all I could remember of the  
journey to Europe,  
Death still haunts me,  
Hiding at every corner.   
By: Lilly and Will. 







## Escape

HELP  
ME!

I once had a home, had a school,  
I once had friends, I once had a loving family,  
I once was happy until the dragons ruined it all,  
It all went in the war.

Mum!  
HELP!

Screams of fear and shock,  
Cries of pain and loss,  
People's lives ending all around,  
It all went in the war.

HELP!  
Daddy!

Leave  
my mummy  
and daddy  
alone!

Suffocating in smoke,  
Being killed for no reason,  
All these people,  
Went in the war.

Mummy,  
I don't  
want us  
to die.

Nanny,  
I can't  
leave  
you!

I had to run the demons were chasing me,  
I wasn't safe.  
I got onto a boat, I knew everything was gone,  
It all went in the war.

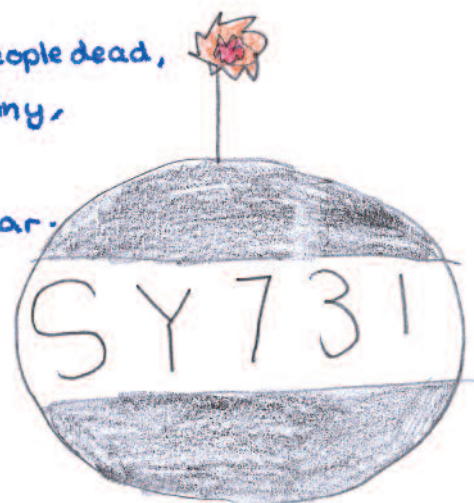
Granddad  
don't go.

Across the sea half the people dead,  
Drowning in peaceful harmony,  
Will I get there, will I live,  
Now that it all went in the war.

Where  
do we  
go?

I want  
Nanny  
back!

The bombs were dragons,  
The soldiers were demons.







## **Comments**

**Comments about 'We all sleep under the same stars' poems inspired by the refugee experience for Greenfield Primary School Year Six and their teachers.**

### **Authors**

#### **Verna Wilkins**

*"Thank you for sharing your amazing selection of poems. They are a beautifully written with great sensitivity. The use of language works extremely well and every emotion is clearly depicted in these poems."*

#### **Bali Rai**

*"We live in a time that feels devoid of hope. Our common humanity, as understood through that most essential of traits, empathy, seems to have been forgotten. With this stunning collection, the Year 6 children of Greenfield Primary School in Stourbridge have shown that not only is empathy alive and well, but that hope is always with us. These poems are thoughtful, wonderfully well-written and remind us that we are one race, sharing one world. They are a triumph."*

#### **Beverley Naidoo**

*"Great combination: your imaginative session followed by reflection, reading and conversation with enthusiastic teachers!"*

#### **Tracey Corderoy**

*"Your poems made me stop and think. They made me imagine, and feel. And that, in my opinion, is the best sort of poetry. Your words sound like you understand and you're not afraid to say it as it is. Your work speaks in a touching and mature way. Thank you for sharing such wonderfully thoughtful pieces..."*

#### **Tim Bowler**

*"Dear children, I love your poems and pictures. They're extremely moving and they beautifully express the pain and fear that refugees must feel when they're forced to leave their homes. Well done to all of you and thank you for letting me see your work. I send my best wishes".*

#### **Jo Cotterill**

*"Wonderful poems here, a real range of styles and each one very powerful. I love the way the poets have used repetition to bring musicality to their verses. My favourite lines of all are by Jack and Emma: "If life were to deal a different hand, We wouldn't be at the wrong end of the tunnel." Very strong metaphor, and very effective. And I love the creative illustrations from everyone too! Well done to everyone involved".*

#### **Alan Gibbons**

*"What wonderful poems! One of the finest qualities human beings can have is their ability to see through another person's eyes, feel the beat of their heart, sense their sadness and fear, hopes and dreams. That is exactly what the young people in this collection did in these brilliantly observed pieces of writing"*



## We All Sleep Under The Same Stars



**Kate Maryon**

*"Amazing poems!"*

**Elizabeth Laird**

*"Thank you so much for sending me these remarkable poems. They're full of feeling and passion, imagination and courage. I'd like to thank the children for writing them. Let's hope they go on being the poets they are!"*

**Cathy Cassidy**

*"I loved these poems – they're amazing, uplifting, thought-provoking and powerful. These eleven year olds understand the plight of refugees far more clearly than many adults... there is a lot we can learn from this collection".*

**Candy Gourlay**

*"These poems are by turns bleak and hopeful and oh if only the adult world had so much empathy and poetry as these young people, there wouldn't be so much harm and healing would happen more quickly. Their words are important and the world should see them"*

**Bev Brenna (Canada)**

*"What a powerful collection! I truly believe that writing can make a difference! The thoughts these writers present have the kind of empathy that can make our world a supportive one for all people. I look forward to the day when these children are the adults in control--they will make good decisions. Keep writing! You are very gifted!"*

## We All Sleep Under The Same Stars

### Pippa Goodhart

*"I think that all those poems are truly powerful. They paint pictures in the mind of destruction and danger at sea and places of safety. But they also take us inside those experiencing war and escape. They make us feel their experience."*

### Poets

#### Kevin Cowdall

*"For me, a poem is a record of a thought, memory, observation, or point-of-view; and the children here have captured that perfectly! An incredibly thoughtful and thought provoking, collection - oh, to see the world through a child's eyes! My congratulations to all involved."*

#### Jonathan Taylor

*"These are beautiful poems. What a wonder project: the poems are touching, honest and frighteningly realistic. The children clearly understand what poetry can do best, which is express empathy, understanding for others. Given what's happening in the world at the moment, there isn't much that's more important. Thank you for sending them."*



### Other Comments

#### Kay Reid (USA)

I am just writing to thank you all for your wonderful poetry . How talented you are! Your words were very touching and heartfelt. You painted so many pictures in my head with your words. I live in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA and as you have probably seen on the news, we now have a different President and administration here.

Things are very worrying at the moment. Suggestions are being made to halt some immigrants coming to our country and to send some people back to the countries they came from. Many people escaped very difficult lives, persecution and wars to arrive here. Their journey has not been an easy one and continues to be very difficult for them. Some children were brought here at a very early age to try and get more opportunities and to have the chance to go to school here. Can you imagine going to school in one country and then having to leave your life and all your friends to return to a country where there is little hope?

We have one of the biggest refugee camps in the US in Charlotte and the children mainly go to schools near to where I live. Our city is a very welcoming and diverse



## We All Sleep Under The Same Stars



place with opportunities for everyone and we want to keep it like that!

It may seem that America is being very unwelcoming but please don't believe all you see on the news reports, the majority of all Americans are not happy with this change in attitude. Unfortunately, the FEW are making us ALL seem hostile. Believe me, we are not. After all, our country was founded on immigration.

Think of Ellis island and the Statue of Liberty in New York. We should not forget this. The world is a global place that can sometimes seem unwelcoming and unfair, but hold onto the fact that there are lots of good people who will fight for those who need or ask for help. You have taken a step along this road with your poetry. I look forward to reading more of your work and KEEP ON WRITING as you will make a difference!

### **Joanna Hunting (France)**

Kay sent your message for me to look at, it is very relevant to the work we are doing here in the Council of Europe and I'm delighted to read these poems. I've sent the link to my colleagues in the Children's Division who are doing a lot on children's rights, to our Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees and to my colleague here in the Youth Department who is working with young migrants and refugees (mainly 16-30 year olds) on social inclusion and participation.

Our work with regard to migrants and refugees is mainly rights-based, we are not in a position to provide humanitarian aid. Congratulations on your excellent initiative! I also sent the link to a colleague who is a great book fan as I'm sure he will be interested in that aspect of your project

# We All Sleep Under The Same Stars

I really love visiting Greenfield Primary School because as soon as you walk through the door there are wonderful displays about authors and books. The staff and children so obviously value the importance of reading and enjoying books and this time I was invited to work with the whole of Year 6 about asylum seekers and refugees and how they are portrayed in books.

I started the session by showing them a badge with the slogan 'We all sleep under the same stars' and they were keen to tell me that this meant that people were the same across the world because they were human. I was so impressed at their intense concentration and obvious concern for the terrible plight of people who had to flee their homes. I was very encouraged by their initial response to extracts from stories like 'The Other Side of Truth' by Beverley Naidoo; 'When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit' by Judith Kerr; 'Shadow' by Michael Morpurgo and 'The Arrival' by Shaun Tan because they showed such maturity and compassion.

A few days later I was delighted to receive these wonderfully illustrated poems that demonstrated such sensitivity and empathy. I am sure that you will agree that they are also very promising young authors who have clearly been inspired and encouraged by teachers who are passionate about helping them to develop their creative writing.

They have been congratulated by many people, including several children's authors who have been moved by their words and very impressed by the quality of their writing. When I went back to talk to the children about publishing the collection as a printed book they were understandably excited and also suggested that we should send copies to Donald Trump, Theresa May and other world leaders. Perhaps we should.

Karen Argent  
The Letterpress Project Director



This project was supported by the Working with Children Young People and Families team who are part of the School of Human Sciences at Newman University in Birmingham.

Newman University is committed to supporting Social Justice as a part of its mission and offers a range of programmes which are informed by this perspective. For further details please visit the website: [www.newman.ac.uk](http://www.newman.ac.uk)