

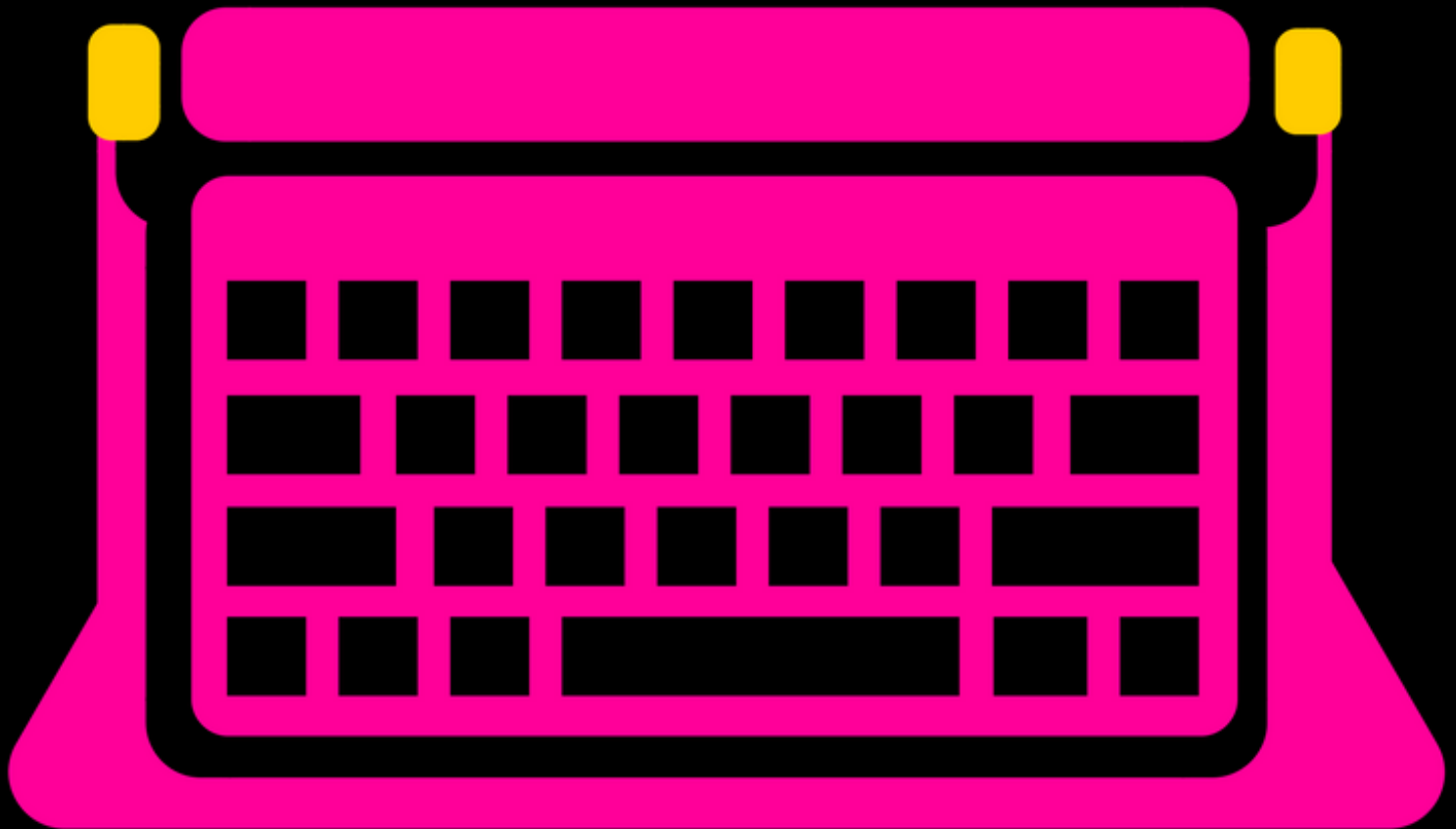
winners 2018

FALKIRK COMMUNITY TRUST LIBRARIES

WRITING

GRAMMY

EVERYBODY IN!



#WRITINGRAMMY



Falkirk
Community
Trust

RAMMY: SCOTS NOUN MEANING A NOISY DISTURBANCE OR FREE-FOR-ALL}

The Writing Rammy is Falkirk's short fiction competition, run by Falkirk Community Trust Libraries.

Now in it's second year, the competition is for EVERYONE - hence the "rammy" - you can be 5 or 105!

Entrants need to be resident in the Falkirk area and write a piece of fiction or poetry on a theme of their choice. There's also a competition for families - **The Family Rammy** - where mums, kids, uncles and grannies send in their entries together.

Judging this year was incredibly difficult and, as a result, we awarded some of our amazing adult entrants commended prizes. Unexpectedly, Gary, our winner from 2017, submitted another highly original piece of fiction to claim first prize for the second year in a row!

Lots of entries from our younger participants made us laugh out loud so, in addition to the main junior prizes, we also added a "Funniest Entry" category.

There's something here for everyone. You'll laugh, you'll shudder and you may even shed a tear at Victoria's beautiful poem about motherhood.

If you live in the Falkirk area, we hope you might be inspired to enter next year. In the meantime, happy reading!

Falkirk Libraries
October 2018

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Foreword by Author Helen MacKinven

As a local writer, I was chuffed to bits to be asked to deliver creative writing workshops to inspire writers to take part in the Writing Rammy Competition. During the sessions, I shared tips and hints on how to develop as a writer. I have learned a lot on the road to publication but if I could sum up all my writing advice in one word it would be – read.

Without being a reader, I don't believe you can be a writer. Growing up, I made weekly visits to the library. It's where I found my passion for books and began to dream of one day seeing my own book on the shelf. But it wasn't easy for a wee lassie from Bonnybridge to become a published writer. That's why it's fantastic to see Falkirk Libraries working hard to encourage and support writers, young and old.

To create a powerful piece of writing in a limited number of words it is important to hook the reader immediately. The successful stories and poems showcased by The Writing Rammy competition all packed a punch. There is a diverse mix of styles which take readers on an emotional rollercoaster and it was a privilege to be involved and read the work of such a talented group of writers.

Helen MacKinven
October 2018



Adult entries

WRITINGrammy 2018
winner

A Staple Economy by Gary Oberg

WRITINGrammy 2018
runner up

The Face of a Mother by Victoria Wright

WRITINGrammy 2018
commended

How To Light Up The World
by Taslin Pollock

Also a Family Rammy winner. See entry on page 25

Talker or Stalker? by Linda Sharkey

Stuck for Words
by Mrs Lawson R Eades

A Staple Economy by Gary Oberg

WRITINGGRAMMY 2018
winner

Emily Sneddon was Falkirk's greatest entrepreneur of the 22nd Century. The founder and CEO of Station Visionary was born in Slamannan in 2083. In this Virtual Age derelict offices and warehouses were filled with redundant technology and industrial waste, but as Emily's biog-app stated: "Where others saw junk, I smelt opportunity."

The entrepreneur bought stockpiles of twentieth-century stationery, including pallet loads of metal staples. These minute, right-angled arches were valued at only one gig-yen per crate as there was no paper literature to bind, and few trees left to produce paper anyway. "I could have recycled them into switchboard components." Emily claimed. "But I saw a staple opportunity in an unstable gigabyte economy."

The dead streets were empty in the Virtual Age. The living areas were filled with citizens silently staring into their holographic phones and VR head-tops, but the stationery visionary found a practical solution to this sedentary problem. Emily embedded tiny timers in VR handsets and headsets and, after an hour of uninterrupted swiping or skyping, the hardware released retractable staples from concealed compartments.

"Reality bites...hard!"

The steel fangs bit into palms and temples, and the pain ejected the user out of the virtual, back into the real world. Once forcibly awakened the virtualoso could switch intravenous for solid sustenance and spend real-time with real people until, inevitably, realvulsion set in. The temporal jolts also gave the awakened the opportunity to wash, and change their soiled clothing.

"I improved the environment," said Emily. "By reducing toxic emissions in teenagers' bedrooms."

/cont. A Staple Economy by Gary Oberg

Emily won global contracts to implant her staples in all major brands of VR units. The staple stockholding was rapidly depleted so the low-tech tycoon replenished her store by purchasing local metal monuments like the Falkirk Kelpies. The entrepreneur recycled the 600 tonnes of rusting horse heads into 2.4 million 0.14 ounce staples, to fulfil her contract with Apple.

"Most horses eat apples, but this Apple ate two horses."

Hardly anyone still physically travelled in this era of cyber-tourism, so the veevees (virtual-voyagers) viewing the Kelpies through VR visors neither knew nor cared that the massive heads were now merely holographic projections.

Emily became a gigabyte millionaire overnight as she converted corroding constructs into billions of psych bites. Unfortunately, her business bit the dust itself two years later when VR-vics became insensate to physical sensation, and their short-term memory receptors failed.

New technology such as E-nema inducers, and T-EMP bursts replaced staples, and ultimately all Emily's recycling plants closed. The retired raconteur travelled physically herself then, until her fateful visit to the Forth Road Bridge in 2130. Tragically, Emily fell to her death through the holographic bridge, forgetting that three years previously she had recycled it into 1.8 billion staples.

Now, a century later, some cyber-tourists claim that if you stare at the Kelpies for twelve memory laps the hologram horses utter alien, arcane words from a bygone era.

"Hole-punches," they whisper. "Pen-tidies, mouse-mats, staple-removers and...and..."

"...Emily Sneddon was Falkirk's greatest entrepreneur of the 22nd Century..."

The Face of a Mother by Victoria Wright

A long pale oval, no cheekbones to speak of,
Eyes too small and dry, cracked lips.
The nose familiar from my grandmother's face,
But longer and thinner, so oddly distorted.

Marks like smudges; freckles in clusters,
Dirty brown stains on a plain white canvas.
Prominent teeth, though less so now,
A pointed chin and an unwelcome fringe.

Tired and old, I appraise myself,
Worry and stress have taken their toll.
Creases appearing and features aslant,
Satisfaction escapes me, though imperfection does not.

My gaze now averted, I find my son,
His face yet a baby, still becoming a boy.
The warmth of his skin, the smell of his head,
The shells of his ears and the pools of his eyes.

His dark sweeping lashes, the flush of his cheeks,
His own little person; a story beginning.
Yet already his skin, once clear and pale,
Is sprinkled with freckles, much like his mum's.

In those tiny traces of our days in the sun,
I see only beauty and, oh, how I love!
In my perfect son, my flaws I forgive,
His face is a wonder, his freckles a gift.

How To Light Up The World by Taslin Pollock

Huge black clouds blocked out the sun. Ella and her classmates looked up through the large sunlight and waited for the clouds to pass before resuming their work. In some ways nothing had changed, Ella thought as she looked down at her arithmetic with a wry smile. A rolled up piece of scrap paper landed on her jotter. Ella didn't need to guess who had thrown it. She quickly covered it with her hand and looked and Lewis who was staring at her with his ruffled hair and toothless grin.

Mr Edwards looked at his watch and stood up abruptly, took the wooden spoon and saucepan lid from his desk and went out into the corridor and began hitting them together to signal the end of school. Ella and Lewis were first out of the door, hearing the usual "don't run in the corridor" echo from behind them.

The recent lighter nights had allowed the children to adventure much further. They headed straight to the railway and were relieved no one else had discovered the abandoned electric train they had commandeered as their hideout. They had climbed in through one of the broken windows which must have happened during the looting days. There wasn't anything to steal now.

Ella reached into her pocket and pulled out the scrap paper. She unfolded it. It read 'Indiana Jones'. "I get to be Indiana this time Ella!" Lewis said. They chased each other up and down the carriage, while humming the theme tune. They collapsed laughing on a couple of the aisle seats.

/cont. How To Light Up The World by Taslin Pollock

When their laughter subsided, Lewis said “I don’t really remember what happened in the movies all that well anymore, Ella.” “It’s more fun this way anyway”, Ella replied, “it’s starting to get darker, we need to head back, come on.” Lewis grabbed their school bags and made his way to the window. Ella followed.

It wasn’t completely dark when they reached nearer their homes, but still a few of the neighbours had lit their candles already. Ella’s house looked deserted as she approached, but she knew better. “Bye Lewis, see you tomorrow, bright and early!” Ella called as she headed straight round back.

Alec was just finishing pegging the tent, Dad was tending to the soup pot on the fire. “Hey Kiddo,” he called when he saw her, “can you head in and grab the blankets and sleeping bags and pop them in the tent before we lose the light completely?” Ella worked quickly and made sure to grab another jumper, her wind-up torch and most importantly, Kiki her toy pig and stuck her in the tent too. They didn’t really do much camping before, but after it happened, lots of families would camp out when the weather was warmer.

“The view is better,” her dad would say, pointing at the stars.

Talker or Stalker?

by Linda Sharkey

It's what girls do all the time - look around before leaving the safety of your car, parking under a streetlight, having keys ready just in case, keep phone in hand, tuck in your ponytail so it doesn't make for an easy grab. But tonight, none of that mattered. 'Hi Sarah, you caught me trying to walk off this stitch. Agony, and doesn't seem to want to go away - probably I'm dehydrated. Is this where you live, I didn't know you were around here.'

That was how it all started...

If I could just grab a quick glass of water, do you mind?

I normally kept my home pretty private, not being a big one for having visiting friends, acquaintances, much less the lycra-clad, sweat patched 'blood porter' who came onto our ward daily picking up samples. But, under the spotlight of a directly asked question and not wanting to be seen as untrusting, paranoid or silly I said an uncomfortably casual 'Sure, come on up'.

We headed up the steps, and I instantly regretted having put off replacing the bulb that illuminated the stairway between the car park and my home.

In the proximity of the stairwell I could smell his sweat, mixed with a generic guy's fragrance and the faintest tinge of body odour. We came in through the hallway, then spotlighted kitchen

'Nice place you have' Sean said, swiping a casual glance all around and then hovering on the photo on the fridge. 'So... live here by yourself, do you? Or with your....?' His eyes rested again on the photo as he intentionally didn't complete the sentence.

continued/

/continued Talker or Stalker by Linda Sharkey

I ran the water from the tap, tipped it away and immediately refilled the glass. It was still dripping down the sides when I hurriedly handed it over.

'Together' I quickly snatched the word from the air, what was I saying? 'We live together, he's due back anytime, he's usually at the gym until he knows I'm due home from my shift'. Lies, complete lies just rolled off my tongue, who was I? I was letting this guy, a guy from work, think I was sharing a flat with, sleeping with, the guy in the photo - the guy who was actually my brother and not my boyfriend.

I noticed that Sean had stopped pacing to try to ease off the stitch he complained of earlier, he was no longer indicating any sort of discomfort, yet the amount of discomfort I was feeling was rising by the minute; so much so, I could almost feel it rising as bile in the back of my throat.

He glugged down the water, placed down the glass then ran his hands down his sides, down his thighs and back up again along his lycraed muscles. 'Well, lets hope that's sorted me. Thanks again for the water - I'd better be off' and with that he headed out the front door. I felt intruded upon, violated - and just a little scared.

Stuck for Words

by Mrs Lawson R Eades

WRITINGRAMMY 2018
commended

I heard about the "Writing Rammy"
fingers tremble, hands are clammy.

Not because I am uptight
simply that I like to write.
I'm itching to put pen to paper
write a poem, Oh what a caper!

Firstly, I must have a theme
can't think of one, so it would seem
I'd like to write with rhyming words
while in the garden with the birds
What must I do to get inspired?
this thinking lark makes me feel tired.

I need to give my mind a shoogle
or get some good ideas from Google
Take a walk to Grahamston Station
that might give me inspiration.
Ride with grandson on a train
maybe activate my brain.

Does the topic really matter
as long as there's a bit of patter?
Must not moan about the weather
or mention bonny purple heather.
Could write about my love of books
or making things with crochet hooks.

There's always gardening, pretty flowers
sunny days and April showers
Food for thought, have tea and cake
or coffee and a nice tray bake.
That may help me contemplate
being stuck for words can't be my fate

continued/

**Truth be told, it's fair to say
it's been a struggle to write today
Perhaps I'm trying way to hard
to be the next great "Scottish Bard".
Fingers crossed, soon words will flow
perhaps still have a way to go**

**My poetry is incomplete
should I just admit defeat?
Must not quit, will get brain working
somewhere there's a poem lurking
Positive thoughts have made me see
lots of words are there for me**

**Just need to fit them all together
fill the page with written blether
Sometime later in front of me
a poem on the page I see.
In future I must never doubt
there is a poem to come out.**

**Don't want to be Burns or Jacquie Kay
just like to have fun, when with words I play
Mission accomplished, poem complete
now I'm feeling quite upbeat
To Falkirk Libraries now I'll send
Relieved this poem has reached its end.**

Teen entries

WRITINGrammy 2018
winner

The Sailor Man's Other Half
by Calum Loney

WRITINGrammy 2018
runner up

In the Shadows by Eva Varielle

The Sailor Man's Other Half by Calum Loney

WRITINGGRAMMY 2018
winner

The Caribbean Sea -1949-

He wasn't an average sailor. Solomon thought of himself as an ant in the huge world. The Rastafarian man who always had his fishing rod and smoked a pipe. His colourful beanie separated him from his muddy vest and baggy jeans. But he was a kind man, even when he was drunk. I would listen to him ramble about how he used to be a pirate and how they expelled him for not being able to shoot a gun.

"They are very stupid my friend, Never get tied in with them." He mumbled past his burst lips.

The sea was quiet tonight and the only thing that lit it up was the moon that reflected against the water. I was with Solomon to try find my grandfather that used to fish with him, we are sailing to the beautiful island of Aruba. That is where Solomon said my grandfather was living.

"Your grandfather was a good man Henry; He went to Aruba to escape troubles in England."

I already knew that, He reminds me every time he chugs a bottle of bourbon. We were close to Aruba. I could see the small orb of light coming from the lighthouse. But it was still quite far.

"Come on old man, Time for sleep." I tell Solomon as he looks out into the white sea. But as usual he decides to ignore me. I wrap myself in a sheep wool sleeping bag and fall into slumber.

I wake up staring into the burning sun and see Solomon snoring away on the chair he was sitting on before I slept. I exit my sleeping bag and see that Aruba is very close now. I shake Solomon and he wakes up instantly. "Hello friend, are we almost there?" he asks in a sleepy tone.

continued/

/cont. The Sailor Man's Other Half by Calum Loney

I nod and give him a small bowl of tuna that I caught a few days ago, But it never went off because I lightly salted it. Solomon starts to oar the boat onto the glistening beaches of Aruba. Carefully he pushes the oar against a rock and the boat slides onto the sand.

“Pack your things friend, we are here.” He says as he throws a piece of tuna into his mouth.

I grab my Knapsack and swing it onto my back. We head into a small fishing village where Solomon lived in the 20's.

“Your Grandpapa should be in that shack.” He points at a metal shack. I walk over and knock on the door probably made of broken boats. No answer.

I walk into the tiny shack and see a Teen boy sitting on a lobster cage. “Are you Henry?” The boy asks. Solomon walks into the shack. “Yes. Where is my Grandfather?”

“I'm Sorry. He was a very nice man, he helped me.” The boys says quietly.

Solomon steps forward. “No. He can't be dead. He was my best friend...My other half”

In the Shadows

by Eva Varielle

The yellow and black tape rustled as the wind blew. The words 'CRIME SCENE' screamed from under the street lamp.

Someone is behind me. They've been following me. I might be wrong, but I have this horrible feeling.

An investigator on the scene hovers over the body, her hands in blue gloves. "Six stabs, all in the chest and core area, however one is from behind."

They're speeding up now. Their footsteps closer and louder. My breath rasped and spine tingling. I will myself not to turn my head.

Forensics take photos, the flashes lighting up the bleak, dark ally. A bloodied knife ten metres away is covered by a cone, on it saying, 'DO NOT TOUCH.'

With numb fingers I shiver whilst reaching for my phone, its nearly twelve in the morning. I can't stand it anymore, I run.

"Got you." A man's gloved hand grabs my hair.

The investigator stands back, absorbing the scene. "It doesn't make sense. There's no more evidence apart from the weapon, the biggest giveaway."

Dread and terror drain nearly all my senses. Oh God, I don't want it to happen...

She walks over to the people surrounding the one cone. "There's no finger prints, are they?"

"No."

My white coat is quickly getting wetter. He pulls me down so that I'm lying, back on the ground, facing him.

She paces around the woman's body, face contorted. "It was planned, leaving the knife wasn't a stupid mistake. It was left to taunt us."

Junior entries

WRITINGrammy 2018
winner

Boat Trip by Aisling Stassin, age ?

WRITINGrammy 2018
runner up

World War 2 by Ossian Macrae, age 11

 WRITINGrammy 2018
funniest entries

Talkie the Toaster by Daniel Rea, age 8

The Pizza by Fatima Akhbar, age 9

Boat Trip by Aisling Stassin

WRITINGGRAMMY 2018
winner

Today we're going on a boat trip. I'm really excited because it is really choppy outside which will make it ever so fun. Lucky we're in Croatia though, because if we were in Scotland I would refuse to go on the boat.

We're going on the boat now. The waves look almost as excited as me. They're thrashing wildly now as if trying to be higher and fuller than the next. I can't wait for them to fling me up in the air, while my hair joyfully trails behind me.

That is exactly what happens. We're speeding out further and further into the endless abyss. Then suddenly the waves roar louder than ever and I'm falling into the raging waves.

The last thing I remember is the water consuming me and then blackness. A voice is calling on me I can hear it, but I'm not taking it in. Then I'm pulled to my senses as someone shakes me calling.

"Amelia wake up" It's my mum. She's got a look of "please be ok" on her face.

I'm awake now and I'm asking them what happened, but I'm not really though everything just seems to be a dream. I keep replaying the moment I fell in in my head, remembering the immense cold sweeping through me. Then pangs of pain as if something was attacking me.

I start to think why it was so cold because when we left the water was lukewarm. I have no time to think about that though, as my mum is telling me that I'm safe and that everything is ok.

Safe. The word rings through my head like a bell through a town, but somehow I feel like danger is lurking nearby.

World War 2

by Connor Macrae, age 11

WRITINGrammy 2018
runner up

I was in the trenches, gunshots everywhere and bombs going off every minute.

I was scared. I was only 14. I had lied about my age so I could fight. It was the biggest mistake of my life, but I knew I just had to fight and try to survive.

There was no guarantee I was going to.

A bomb went off about 100 metres away killing 4 people. I was lucky I had an AK 47. I peeked over and shot. I thought I killed someone but I didn't know. I peeked again.

This time I wasn't so lucky I got shot in my shoulder and chest. I got carried by the medic.

It was agony. The pain was unbearable I couldn't breathe.

When I came into the hospital there were thousands of people bleeding and dying it was horrible.

When I was better I was scared to go back to the fighting. Once I got my hearing back I didn't want to go back out. I just wanted to go back home.

Bang! The hospital was being bombed I ran out not looking behind me to see the helpless because I could run. It was 11/11/46

For some reason the gunshots got quieter. It was either I was going deaf or everyone had run out of ammo. The German general was waving a white flag. He has surrendered. There was a loud cheer from everyone. Both generals went into no man's land and shook hands. It was over.

Talkie The Toaster

by Daniel Rea, age 8

WRITINGGRAMMY 2018
funniest entry

“Yes,” said Bob “I’ve done it!” as he jumped around. “I’ve made the world’s first talking toaster for kids!”.

You see, Bob loves breakfast and Bob loves toast. Bob also loves science, so he made a robot toaster that can make his breakfast while chatting to him.

Yesterday, while Talkie was making toast, Bob asked his mum “What is 10x90?” Before his mum could answer Talkie said “900 waffles”. Bob and his mum couldn’t believe their ears. Bob said “I’ve invented a toaster that can solve problems!”

Everything was great, but there was a small problem – actually a big problem – actually a massive problem: Every answer Talkie gave he made that amount of waffles. The kitchen was buried in waffles after only three questions and Bob didn’t even like waffles! Bob had to shut down Talkie as Talkie fired hot waffles at his head.

Finally Bob switched off Talkie and put him in the attic. As Bob came downstairs he said to himself: “I wonder if I can make a talking fridge?” Oh no, here we go again!

The Pizza

by Fatima Akhbar, age 9

WRITINGGRAMMY 2018
funniest entry

Right, just to get this straight, I will never, ever, ever eat a pizza, in my life again since yesterday. To catch up my name is Shanon, and now I will tell you a tale about a pizza.



One rainy night, I guess around 9:50ish, I went with my dad delivering pizzas. When the big tower clock struck 10 o'clock it happened! The motorcycle randomly broke down. My dad told me to deliver the pizza to the house, which was coincidentally nearby, while he tried fixing the motorcycle.

As soon as I crossed the road, the pizza box was moving. I thought it was me, so I casually ignored it. Then I heard a noise, "Hey, you." I stopped and looked around, there was nobody around.



"Yes, you, don't ignore me!" the pizza box was moving again, but this time more fiercely.

Crusty

I very cautiously opened the pizza box. Inside there was a pizza, like normal, but this pizza had a face! Yeah, a face. F A C E, spells face, but it was not a pepperoni and mushroom face but an actual face, with lips and a mouth and all that.

I was so startled that I nearly fainted. I sat down on a bench and stared. It spoke, "Howdy, what is your name, mine's Crusty!" I could not believe it, I tried speaking but my mouth was so dry, but I managed a few words, "I'm Shanon and are you real?" I got no reply...





FALKIRK COMMUNITY TRUST LIBRARIES

FAMILY



GRAMMY!



winners

The Pollock family:

How To Light Up The World
by Taslin Pollock

The Unicorn by Aysha Pollock (age 7)

runners up

The Gold family:

Mr Shipton by Audrey Gold
A Recipe for Disaster
by Tamsin Gold (age 12)



#WRITINGGRAMMY



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How To Light Up The World by Taslin Pollock



Huge black clouds blocked out the sun. Ella and her classmates looked up through the large sunlight and waited for the clouds to pass before resuming their work. In some ways nothing had changed, Ella thought as she looked down at her arithmetic with a wry smile. A rolled up piece of scrap paper landed on her jotter. Ella didn't need to guess who had thrown it. She quickly covered it with her hand and looked at Lewis who was staring at her with his ruffled hair and toothless grin.

Mr Edwards looked at his watch and stood up abruptly, took the wooden spoon and saucepan lid from his desk and went out into the corridor and began hitting them together to signal the end of school. Ella and Lewis were first out of the door, hearing the usual "don't run in the corridor" echo from behind them.

The recent lighter nights had allowed the children to adventure much further. They headed straight to the railway and were relieved no one else had discovered the abandoned electric train they had commandeered as their hideout. They had climbed in through one of the broken windows which must have happened during the looting days. There wasn't anything to steal now.

Ella reached into her pocket and pulled out the scrap paper. She unfolded it. It read 'Indiana Jones'. "I get to be Indiana this time Ella!" Lewis said. They chased each other up and down the carriage, while humming the theme tune. They collapsed laughing on a couple of the aisle seats. When their laughter subsided, Lewis said "I don't really remember what happened in the movies all that well anymore, Ella." "It's more fun this way anyway", Ella replied, "it's starting to get darker, we need to head back, come on." Lewis grabbed their school bags and made his way to the window. Ella followed.

continued/

/cont. How to Light up the World by Taslin Pollock

It wasn't completely dark when they reached nearer their homes, but still a few of the neighbours had lit their candles already. Ella's house looked deserted as she approached, but she knew better. "Bye Lewis, see you tomorrow, bright and early!"

Ella called as she headed straight round back. Alec was just finishing pegging the tent, Dad was tending to the soup pot on the fire. "Hey Kiddo," he called when he saw her, "can you head in and grab the blankets and sleeping bags and pop them in the tent before we lose the light completely?" Ella worked quickly and made sure to grab another jumper, her wind-up torch and most importantly, Kiki her toy pig and stuck her in the tent too. They didn't really do much camping before, but after it happened, lots of families would camp out when the weather was warmer.

"The view is better," her dad would say, pointing at the stars.

The Unicorn by Aysha Pollock, age 7



Once upon a time there was a unicorn in the mysterious forest with all the other unicorns.

One day a magical letter came with a magical ring. "Dear Sophie, that ring is very special. I've been captured by the Galactic Empire because of that ring. Love you, Grandma May. P.s help me!"

So Sophie the unicorn stood up for herself and went over the highest mountain and she arrived at the Galactic Empire Base and she saw all the unicorns.

It was a trick so she ran out, then she saw her Grandma May so she took Grandma and all the other unicorns with her. Now everyone called her Sophie the Hero, but where has her mum gone is another adventure for Sophie the hero.

Mr Shipton by Audrey Gold

I'm an expert at this. It's taken months of practice but there's no one better. Is that boasting? In my view, it's just plain statement of fact.

People boast in my shop: their children, their exams, their clubs, their cars, their promotions, their holidays, their homes, on and on they go. They think I want to hear it when I ask them how they're doing. I'm just being friendly; I've got to be friendly, I run the village shop. I need people to come in and spend their money, rather than speeding off to the nearest supermarket in their fancy cars; I just don't want to hear about their whole dreary lives.

They, on the other hand, know nothing about me. To them I'm just someone who sells them bread and wine. But I'm a member of Mensa, you know, IQ of 170. I'm smarter than anyone who comes in here but they think I'm just a pea-brain sized shop keeper.

Don't they know I realise they're patronising me when they ask how I'm doing: "But how are you Mr Shipton?" I know they don't really want to hear. About Mother and her illnesses which brought me back here, about Marjory who loves her dog more than me, and James and Ella, off to university and never returned. Living in London with their fancy jobs. Who do they think gave them their brains? And what thanks do I get? None.

So I hate boasting. But I have mastered this: there's no one better and not once has a hint of suspicion come my way.

The conditions have to be right – a dark night, cloudy, rain is good, the colder the better - fewer people about. I go out with Marjory's dog and Marjory is so, so grateful because it means she doesn't have to go out in the rain or the cold. She doesn't realise I'm just using her and her beloved mutt.

The tree-lined avenues in my village with their large front gardens are ideal – no one can see the road. I walk around looking for my target.

Holding the shiny blade in my gloved hand, I act like a normal dog walker until, on a near-deserted road, I spot my victim.

continued/

/cont. Mr Shipton by Audrey Gold

I approach quietly, look around to make sure I'm not being watched. And then I do it. Stab, slash and then I'm gone. Walk on, unconcerned. Never look back, never run. Undoubtedly the first time was the best but the thrill of it, the power, makes me do it again. And again.

I do worry about being caught, and I worry about overplaying the consoling shopkeeper when it's the talk of the shop the next day. But I find that adds to the thrill. Consoling them for their loss when they don't know I'm the orchestrator of it. Destroying what they love. And they're too stupid to work it out. I destroy the tyres of their precious cars the way I'd like to destroy their lives.

A Recipe for Disaster by Tamsin Gold, age 12



To start, take 50 enormous tractor tyres.

The boy walked around the corner thinking of his school test when - "AAARGH!" wait... what was that? Dozens of tractor tyres were rolling over and over down the hill! Everyone on the hill was lying flat on their stomachs or backs with tyre prints down them, groaning due to broken bones or squashed limbs. He scarpered, otherwise he might have more than his looming English test to worry about...

Now add 60kg of a person acting suspiciously.

Nobody took notice of the man. He had a lighter in one hand and a bottle of liquid in the other. But still nobody took any notice of this person acting suspic- BANG!!! The whole street was now in flames! People ran in every direction just hoping to survive! The emergency services were at the scene in an instant, a picture of devastation in front of them, but the suspicious looking person was nowhere to be seen...

Repeat this step in towns and cities around the world.

Then add a place that no sane person would want to be...and a person no one would want to meet.

"My plan is succeeding. I am sending the world into a state of frenzy! Mwah ha ha ha!!!" the voice rattled on into the night...

Stir this all altogether and you have a sure-fire recipe for disaster...



With thanks to everyone who entered, particularly our winners, runners up and those commended.

Special thanks to those who read their wonderful stories at our Writing Rammy winners' ceremony on October 11th, 2018 (pictured above).

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