

LET NO-ONE STEAL YOUR DREAMS

Let no-one steal your dreams
Let no-one tear apart
The burning of ambition
That fires the drive inside your heart

Let no-one steal your dreams
Let no-one tell you that you can't
Let no-one hold you back
Let no-one tell you that you won't

Set your sights and keep them fixed
Set your sights on high
Let no-one steal your dreams
Your only limit is the sky

Let no-one steal your dreams
Follow your heart
Follow your soul
For only when you follow them
Will you feel truly whole

Set your sights and keep them fixed
Set your sights on high
Let no-one steal your dreams
Your only limit is the sky

One of my very favourite poems – it seems to have lived a life of its own. It's been adopted by schools as their mission statement, motto, leaver's poem – been used as the words to at least three songs three thousand children have sung it as part of Sing Together ...

MAY YOU ALWAYS

May your smile be ever present
May your skies be always blue
May your path be ever upward
May your heart be ever true

May your dreams be full to bursting
May your steps be always sure
May the fire in your soul
Blaze on for evermore

May you live to meet ambition
May you strive to pass each test
May you find the love your life deserves
May you always have the best

May your happiness be plentiful
May your regrets be few
May you always be my best friend
May you always ... just be you

A companion piece to Dreams ...

I BELIEVE IN POETRY

I believe in poetry
I believe in the word
Words never read are sleeping or dead
Words have a need to be heard
Because I believe in poetry

The poetry out of the ordinary
The poetry out of the everyday
The poetry out of the mundane
The poetry of cliché
Because I believe in poetry

The power of the line
Or the power of the rhyme
Those words that mark that moment in time
Those words sublime
They are yours and mine
Because I believe in poetry

The fun of a pun
But words are a gun
My tongue is the trigger - if I should pull it
Words of hate and words of hurt
Words are a speeding, unfeeling bullet

But words can bring us together
Or words can tear us apart
Words of feeling, words of healing
Words to melt the coldest heart
Words to melt the oldest heart
Words are always the place to start
Because I believe in poetry

Words that beseech
Words that can preach
Words that can teach
Or extend the hand of friendship when they reach
Out ... and about –
Words that shout
Words that whisper
Words that seduce
Words that kiss you
Because I believe in poetry

Words that fall away like dust
Or words that stand the test of time
That make you want that next line

Remembered and quoted
Published and noted
Words that shine a light
Words that ignite

Words that inspire
Words that touch our very souls
Words that light the fire
Words that take us even higher

Because we are creators
Gods and magicians
Spelling with letters
For words or for better
Better for words

Twenty six alphabetical letters
Put them together for ever and ever
Mathematical combinations
Infinite configurations
Twenty six letters defining our history
Twenty six letters of magic and mystery
Twenty six letters of possible tongue twistry

I believe in rhythms and rhyme
Alliteration and assonance
Syntax and simile
Metaphor, the metaphysical ...
But most of all
I believe in words that sound dead good
When they are read out loud
Because I believe in poetry

I believe what a friend of mine said
If it doesn't sound good when it's read
Then it's not a very good poem

These words must have a voice
More than just their phonic noise
Once they have been spoken
Out in the open
The page is unlocked, the boundaries broken
Because I believe that poems can break down walls
I believe in poetry

I believe in the word
Words never read are sleeping or dead
Words have a need to be heard
Because I believe in poetry

A sort of mission statement about my own views about poetry – the first draft was written in a hotel room in Melaka (Kuala Lumpur) and then performed to over a thousand teachers the next day

FATHER'S HANDS

Father's hands
Large like frying pans
Broad as shovel blades
Strong as weathered spades

Father's hands
Finger ends ingrained with dirt
Permanently stained from work
Ignoring pain and scorning hurt

I once saw him walk boldly up to a swan
that had landed in next door's drive and wouldn't move.
The police were there because swans are a protected species
but didn't do anything, but my dad walked up to it,
picked it up and carried it away. No problem.
Those massive wings that can break a man's bones
were held tight, tight by my father's hands
and I was proud of him that day, really proud.

Father's hands
Tough as leather on old boots
Firmly grasping nettle shoots
Pulling thistles by their roots

Father's hands
Gripping like an iron vice
Never numb in snow or ice
Nails and screws are pulled and prised

He once found a kestrel with a broken wing
and kept it in our garage until it was better.
He'd feed it by hand with scraps of meat or dead mice
and you could tell where its beak and talons
had taken bits of skin from his finger ends.
It never seemed to hurt him at all, he just smiled
as he let it claw and peck.

Father's hands
Lifting bales of hay and straw
Callused, hardened, rough and raw
Building, planting, painting, more ...

Father's hands
Hard when tanning my backside
All we needed they supplied
And still my hands will fit inside

Father's hands
Large like frying pans
Broad as shovel blades
Strong as weathered spades

And still my hands will fit inside
My father's hands.

For personal reasons, one of my all time favourites – everything in the poem is absolutely true. Anyone who'd ever met my dad had commented on the size and strength of his hands – especially when he shook your hand! This poem was written as part of a workshop with Year 10 boys in Bradford many years ago – we were writing poems about members of our families and they were reluctant writers (to say the least !) who said “We'll write a poem if you do” ... I'm so glad they did

THE GREATEST MESSAGE

Embrace this feeling we call faith
Believe and live in hope and truth
Learn to love as we'd be loved
The idealism of our youth

It's time to banish all those schemes
That would invade and sour our dreams
It's time to stand and turn our backs
On all the forces that attack

It's time to act, it's time to face
The powers that erode our faith
The faith passed down that we inherit
The strength within the human spirit

It's time to see through grown up eyes
Once and for all to realise
That love is love is love is love
And nothing to be frightened of

Yes, love is love is love is love
Like black and white, like hand in glove
Patient, kind and from above
Yes love is love is love is love

So keep the faith, hold tight the hope
Hope for the future we dream of
Faith, hope and love, these three remain
The greatest of them all is love

*A new one – written as part of the “messages” theme to National Poetry Day 2016.
Sometimes, when you have to write something for a project you end up with
something you'd never have thought of ... if that makes sense – plus I wanted to
write a serious rhyming poem*

MUM AND DAD ARE MUM AND DAD

Mum and dad are mum and dad
Well, they are – but in some ways they're not
You see, although they didn't actually
Physically bring me into this world
They did bring me up in this world

Adopted at birth
Mum and dad are mum and dad
And always have been

Never once have I wanted to go back
Trace the roots and dig up the past
Never once have I wanted to question
Face to face and flesh to flesh
With whoever brought me into this world
And then, for whatever reason
Let me go

What has been is
What will be is
What is is
And never once have I wanted to change it

Mum and dad are mum and dad
Always have been
And always will be

They chose me
And if I had a choice
I know with all my heart
That I could not have chosen better

A really personal piece – again, all true

LOVE, HOPE AND STRENGTH

May the love of those around you
Enfold you in its wings
May the hope of those uplift you
Time and time again
May all those who surround you
Give you strength within

May the prayers of those who pray for you
Be answered from the start
May the light of those both near and far
Shine amidst the dark
May the fellowship of friends
Be forever in your heart

May the love and hope and strength and light
Ease your heavy load
May all of this and much, much more
Carry you along the road

May the arms of those who hold you
Carry you along
May the tongues of those who sing
Forever sing your song
May the hearts of those who love you
Keep you ever strong

May the eyes of those who look out
See you through each day
May the ears of those who listen
Hear each word you say
May the laughter and the smiles
Illuminate each shadowed way

May the love and hope and strength and light
Ease your heavy load
May all of this and much, much more
Carry you much further down the road

Another new one – this was a very quick and heartfelt response to news I'd heard about friends and the situation they found themselves in healthwise

GO EXPLORE THE COUNTRYSIDE

A Summer's day, a bunch of friends
Bows and arrows, building dens
Make belief and let's pretend
All of this and much more when
Finding tallest trees to climb
Leave reality behind
Hide and seek and lots to find
Losing track of space and time
A place to chase and seek and hide
Go explore the countryside

Rope swings over muddy ditches
Stepping stones and building bridges
Snagging clothes on hawthorn hedges
Balancing on stony ledges
Buttercups beneath the chin
Spinning jennies spin and spin
Grass between the thumbs that sing
Dock leaf cures for nettle stings
Hikes to hike and bikes to ride
Go explore the countryside

A piece of penknife poetry
Initialed love hearts there to see
Carved graffiti on the tree
From here to eternity
Flat and smooth skimming stones
Four leaf clovers, pine cones
Branches look like monster bones
Escape from all the mobile phones
All of these and more beside
Go explore the countryside

Be a cowboy, be a pirate
Let the geography inspire it
Be a soldier, be a knight
Find that stick to fight that fight
Forest shadows, grass that's high
A place to laugh or shout or cry
Caves and bones and stones and rocks
Blowing dandelion clocks
Imagination – far and wide
Go explore the countryside

Let your dog run and run
Lose your dad and hide from mum
There is space for everyone
In God's fair ground filled with fun
Time for families to run wild
Find that hidden inner child
A fallen tree's a crocodile
Lose yourself and stay awhile

Feel the secrets on the breeze
Feel the past within the trees
Eternity in flowing streams
Rugged rocks and crystal seams
In this eternal field of dreams

Go explore, go explore
Go explore - it's what it's for
All of this and much, much more
Mother Nature's superstore
Where geography, biology
And history - they all collide
There's majesty and mystery
Passing time for me and you
Lots of things to make and do
Yesterdays or something new
Go explore - you know it's true
The magic here, the magic there
Take your time to stop and stare
Be sanctified and goggle eyed
Satisfied and gratified
Come back to
Come back to
The magic of the countryside

*Partly inspired by John Cooper Clarke's magnificent "Nation's Ode To The Coast"
and partly by my own experiences of growing up in a rural area and the great
memories I have there. Also, I wanted to explore further the idea of writing a
rhyming poem that wasn't based on humour*

Love Poem For Reading

I just can't wait to be with you
Time flies by when you are there
You take me to another place
A favourite book and a comfy chair.

You fill my head with images
And feelings I can't wait to share
You touch all my emotions
A favourite book and a comfy chair.

Where you go I follow
You can take me anywhere
Horizons disappear with you...
A favourite book and a comfy chair.

Invisible Magicians

Thanks be to all magicians,
The ones we never see,
Who toil away both night and day
Weaving spells for you and me.

The ones who paint the rainbows
The ones who salt the seas
The ones who purify the dew
And freshen up the breeze

The who brighten lightening
The ones who whiten snow
The ones who shine the sunshine
And give the moon its glow

The ones who buff the fluffy clouds
And powder blue the skies
The ones who splash the colours on
The sunset and sunrise

The ones who light volcanoes
The ones who soak the showers
The ones who wave the waves
And open up the flowers

The ones who spring the Spring
And warm the Summer air
The ones who carpet Autumn
And frost the Winter earth

The ones who polish icicles
The ones who scatter stars
The ones who cast their magic spells
Upon this world of ours

Thanks to one and thanks to all
Invisible and true
Nature's magic heaven sent
To earth for me and you.