

## BALLEA WRITERS NEWS

### Publication and One Thousand Euro Worth of Prizes To be awarded in Ballea Writers Young Poets of the Year Competition Submit by March 16th 2007

Ballea Writers give free poetry workshops to schools. The workshops convey that writing poetry is FUN. To tap into the fun and the creativity we run a timed exercise designed to bypass the rational side of the brain and unlock the creative side of the brain. The children, three classes at a time, are instructed to, in a three minute first draft, get as much as possible onto a page without stopping for punctuation, spellings or giving any concern to handwriting. Before we look at what they have written we ask for a show of hands from those who found this fun: over 90% of children raise their hands. Then we ask for a show of hands from anyone who doesn't normally enjoy writing exercises at school but enjoyed this exercise; over 75% of children raise their hands. They liken it to the buzz of a fairground ride, opening their Christmas presents or setting off on an exotic holiday. We then ask one child from each class to read their piece. What we are looking for is a kernel of something, within their piece, that could be worked into a poem; say a sting of three to five resonating words. We get that ok but we often get a great deal more. Lots of the children, from their three minute pieces, present a finished or near finished poem. And we're not talking limericks here we're talking sophistication: pieces littered with alliteration, metaphors and complicated rhyme structures. One third class girl, who got up to read her piece, read the twelve lines of poetry on her page and then kept on reading. I looked over her shoulder, dumbstruck, as she 'read' what wasn't on the page. She went on for another twelve lines and I thought that she must have switched to invisible ink! Not at all, the additional poetry flowed straight from her creative brain in all its glory. I asked her to write it down immediately before she forgot it. Ballea writers have concluded that the next round of workshops should include even younger children because so far the seven to eight year-olds are leading the pack in the quality of their pieces. Generally the younger people are; the less scared of/conditioned against they are about allowing their creativity to run free. It's difficult to get workshop slots at the secondary schools at the moment because the pre Junior Cert and pre Leaving Cert exams are in progress and the fourth years are out on work experience but we will come to any school that can fit us in somewhere,

even its just for a couple of classes. We are getting hundreds, potentially thousands, of poetry entries for our competition. The teachers tell us that the huge response is directly related to the success of the workshops; we have succeeded in showing that writing poetry is fun. Some children have submitted six or more poems so they must be writing them at home as well as at school. This newfound enthusiasm for writing poetry is something that they can carry with them long after school, its something that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives. Besides Fun we convey that poetry is a very powerful medium of expression and that people listen to what is said by poets nowadays just like they listened a few hundred years ago when poets were about the only educated people and effectively the politicians. We therefore encourage children to write about something that they really care about because if they don't care they won't evoke the reader to care. The example poem this week is 'Endangered Species' written in 1993 by eight-year old Thomas Phillips Howard of Ballea Castle who, in his youth, lived in the African bush where he came to love wildlife. This poem became the song of the P.E.S. Protecting Endangered Species club that Thomas formed. Thomas won the premier award of The Royal Society of St George, not for the poetry per se, but the impact of his poetical message. As a direct result of his writing a convoy of trucks, filled to the brim with donated fur coats, were sent to Bosnia to keep the refugees, another 'endangered species' from freezing to death on the mountains. The trucks of fur coats left at 4.am on the morning on March 12th 1994. One of the trucks crashed on route causing national headline 'Crash is Blow to Mercy Mission'. This headline caused thousands more fur coats to be donated to the refugees. Thomas woke up each morning to heaps of fur coats in his front garden. Some had interesting notes attached: 'my mother-in-law bought me this but now I've an excuse to get rid of it, Thank you Thomas. Thomas was flown to England and driven by stretch limousine to the Cathedral to be presented with his award. This is what Lord Lieutenant Henry Elwes said when he presented the award. 'If Thomas, the youngest ever recipient of this great award, can achieve so much so young I wish I could be alive to see what impact he has made on the world by my age. I can still believe that there is hope for our world through youths like Thomas'. The message is loud and clear; strong poetry is listened to.

The following is an extract from Thomas' poem. Endangered Species I am the big Blue Whale, The largest in the sea, Join the P.E.S club And try to help save me.

*Chorus  
For when I'm gone I'm gone,  
And when I'm here I'm here,  
I need your help right now  
Species'  
My future is unclear.*

*I am the Basking Shark,  
My life is in the dark,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And I will live near Sark.*

*I am the Grizzly Bear,  
But I'm becoming rare,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And make my future fair.*

*I am the lonely Leopard  
Hiding far up in a tree,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And make my life more free.*

*The U.S Bald Eagle,  
Is threatened by pollution,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And help find a solution.*

*The African Elephant,  
Is hunted for its tusks,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And make a lot of fuss.*

*The Woolly Spider Monkey  
Is only in Brazil,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And help its forests fill.*

*The Arabian Oryx,  
Is a handsome beast,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And help it breed at least.*

*The Peregrine Falcon,  
Flies over British sky,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And see that fewer die.*

*The male Komodo Dragons,  
Are desperate for more wives,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And see that they survive.*

*Black Bears of South America,  
Are struggling for survival,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
And help in their revival.*

*The Greater Horseshoe bat,  
Lives in barns and roofs,  
Join the P.E.S. club  
So it will get more food.*

*Chorus  
For When I'm gone I'm gone,  
And when I'm here I'm here,  
I need your help right now  
My future is unclear.*

**Thomas Phillip-Howard aged 8**

Thomas illustrated each verse of Endangered Species as he wrote them. Now, aged 21, Thomas is a student in Animation and Illustration and still loves writing; he intends to take a Masters Degree and then start his own comic. Thomas will illustrate a selection of the sixty winning poems from Ballea Writers Young Poets of the Year Competition. He will choose which poems to illustrate but the poems that evoke the senses have the most chance of being

chosen. He loves drawing dragons, monsters, martial arts, beautiful women, and just about anything Japanese. His recent drawings are stylised and heavily influenced by Manga. The sixty winning poems and their illustrations will be published as a book and there is a call from schools to have this book as a school text. The 'Poems for Children' type of books that are currently used in schools are written by adults attempting to write as children and bear little or no resemblance to the poetry that children write. Children are a great deal more sophisticated and intelligent in their poetry than the adult poets, up to now, have given them credit for. Thomas's poem has some imperfections in the rhyme and in the rhythm but it never sacrifices meaning. To hold the meaning Thomas had to use some three syllable words like pollution, extinction and survival. He also had to use four syllable words like persecution, generations and marsupials. There's a trend, especially with competition poetry, to keep to words of one or two syllables because words flow better that way. But meaning is everything in poetry. Good poetry delivers a message, it isn't just words strung together for flow. Ideally the flow should compliment the meaning and the meaning compliment the flow. Unlike an adult poet impatient to get the muse on the page Thomas wrote two verses of Endangered Species every week for twenty-two weeks. Few adults could sustain such passion for such a length of time. Thomas researched each animal thoroughly as he went. It is this thoroughness

that underlines the truth of what he wrote and lets others believe and be moved by what he says. He enables people to connect with the individual animals as much as the theme. On our marking scheme, detailed in last week's poetry page, he would get 18/20 marks i.e. 8/8 for originality 4/6 for form and 6/6 for the ending, a chorus, that brings one back to the beginning.

Goodness knows what he will write when he finds out about Naomi Campbell modelling beautiful white fluffy coats made of beautiful white fluffy dogs! I haven't had the heart to tell Thomas but we have had a competition entry on this very theme. 'Dogs Coat' has been entered in our junior category and whether it makes it through to our final selection or not it will get published. The young poets competition is divided into three categories; Junior i.e. 4th to 6th class, Intermediate i.e. 1st to 3rd year and Senior i.e. 4th to 6th year. Each category will have awards for 1st, 2nd and 3rd, three Highly Commended and 14 runners up. There will thus be twenty winners per age range and sixty winners overall.

### PRIZES

Sponsored by Maryville Equestrian Centre and Martin Walsh Pharmacy All sixty winners will be photographed for the Carrighoun newspaper, get a certificate and a rosette and have their poetry published in a book. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed entrants and the Highly Commended will get additional publications and public recitals of their poetry at the awards ceremony on March

31st and again at the launch of the book. The cash prizes are: Euro 75 for firsts, Euro 50 for seconds, Euro 25 for thirds and Euro 10 for Highly Commendeds. The 1st prize winners will also get a, Euro 25, lesson in show jumping at Maryville, the new Equestrian Centre of Carrigaline. The book of sixty poems will be named by the title of the winning poem i.e. the submission from the overall winner: 'Ballea Writers Young Poet of the Year' and a selection of the poems in the book will be illustrated by a professional.

### RULES

- 1/ Spelling will Not be taken into consideration
- 2/ Entries must be typed, or neatly handwritten, on white single-sided A4 papers and contain nothing other than the Poem, it's Title and page number.
- 3/ The author's date of birth, name, address, telephone, e-mail, school, class, contact teacher, and a cross-reference to the Title should appear on a cover page only. 4/ Poems may be up to a maximum of forty lines in length
- 5/ Poems may be on any theme or subject.
- 6/ The entry fee is a Euro 2 coin per poem. Individuals may enter as many poems as they wish but each poem and its entry fee must be submitted in a separate envelope, marked 'Ballea Writers Young Poets of the Year Competition'
- 7/ Entry is accepted on the understanding that, while copyright remains with the authors, Ballea Writers are granted the publication rights to the poems for a one-year period i.e. until March 31st 2008.
- 8/ Be sure to make your own copies because submissions cannot be returned.
- 9/ The decisions of the judges are final.
- 10/ Poems must reach the collection points, the Carrighoun newspaper, Maryville Equestrian Centre, Martin Walsh Pharmacy, The Carrigaline Court Hotel or a participating Schools by 5pm on March 16th 2007.

### CONTACT

Ballea Writers, who meet in the Ballea Suite of the Carrigaline Court Hotel from 7.30-9.30 most Mondays, can be contacted at balleawriters@gmail.com Ballea Writers have different sessions for fiction, poetry and journalism each month. The annual membership fee of Euro 38 covers all the disciplines. There is a sub of Euro 5 per workshop for adults and workshops for schools are free of charge.

### NOTE

Some schools have their training day scheduled for March 16th so Ballea writers will collect the poetry competition entries from those schools on the afternoon of March 15th. Any late entries, up to March 20th only, can be deposited in our box at the Carrigaline Court Hotel.



Eight-year old Shannon O'Hagan, of St John's School Carrigaline, posts her poetry entry for the Ballea Writers Young Poets of the Year Competition. Martin Walsh Pharmacy, joint sponsors of the cash prizes with Maryville Equestrian Centre, will give goody bags of smellies etc to the sixty winners.