

# Connections Schools Poetry Contest 2025

---

**The Centre for New Writing's Schools Poetry Competition is now in its ninth year and what a pleasure and privilege it has been to work with schools and pupil referral units across Manchester this year.**

My thanks to Dr. Rebecca Hurst, for expertly overseeing this project, to our brilliant mentors (Charlotte, Ellie, Bryn, Candice, Alfred, Sam and Lucy), and to all the participating schools and teacher contacts. Thank you, also, to our poet judges, Jason Allen-Paisant and Charlotte Wetton.

Everyone who submitted a poem should be applauded – for taking up the challenge, following your inspiration, letting your voice emerge. Every poem is an engagement with the world and our place in it, and writing creatively can be an outlet, a consolation, an illumination, a challenge, a provocation – whatever you want it to be. The poems in this pamphlet fizz with ideas and imagination, with curiosity and with a hopeful attentiveness to what connects us. Congratulations to all of the winners – and please keep writing!

**Dr. Kaye Mitchell**

Director, Centre for New Writing,  
The University of Manchester

Centre  
for **New**  
**Writing**

---

---

## **The Web of Science**

**By YA (Whalley Range High School)**  
**Overall Competition Winner**

Look around - what do you see?  
A world shaped by discovery.  
From smallest cell to the vastest star,  
Science connects us, near and far.

The blood that flows, the air we breathe,  
The changing tides, the rustling leaves,  
The food we eat, the roads we tread,  
Science weaves the path ahead.

A falling fruit, a bending light,  
The hidden forces, bold yet sight.  
Newton watched, and Einstein dreamed,  
And from their minds, new worlds were seen.

Pasteur's lens revealed the fight,  
A war of life beyond our sight.  
With healing hands, we learned to stand,  
To heal, to cure, to understand.

Waves unseen now shape our days,  
A silent web in endless rays.  
Signals flash, and voices fly,  
Science lifts us to the sky.

From fire's spark to circuits bright,  
From healing hands to future flights,  
Each step we take, each dream we weave,  
Is built on truths we dare believe.

So, as we learn, as we explore,  
Through every lab, through every door,  
Let's not forget, in grand or small,  
Science connects us -- one and all.

---

---

## My raindrop

**by Aylah Imaan Khurram** (Levenshulme High School)  
**First Prize Winner**

Oh, sweet raindrop where have you been.  
I have searched and searched but you're nowhere to be seen.  
I have looked everywhere, up and down,  
But I still don't know where you'll be found.  
Up at the clouds I have watched and watched,  
But still there is no sound.  
I waited for the time when you'll be mine.  
Then I see a twinkle from the sky,  
Landing upon my thigh.  
Oh, sweet raindrop where have you been,  
I searched and searched but you were nowhere to be seen.  
I looked everywhere, up and down,  
For now, you have been lost and found.

---

---

## The Villages of Pakistan

**by Mujeeb** (MSPRU, Clayton Learning Centre)  
**First Prize Winner**

Landed in the villages of Pakistan  
lights shining  
bright when  
you land;

They start to  
fade as the  
power is sucked  
from the city.

All you see  
are the hot  
embers of  
the ends of  
cigarettes.

The hush of  
the day is  
fading  
But the noise  
of the  
generators  
is no where  
to be heard

Power...

But it's not ours

Neighbouring villages  
have started to  
Advance.

Our poor old  
village has  
started its  
past

Hope  
is our last  
chance.

---

---

## A scientist's observations of a leaf's adaptations (a poet's description of a leaf's beauty)

by **Arisha Choudhury** (Streford Grammar)  
**First Prize Winner**

Leaves contain a green pigment, chlorophyll.  
This absorbs light for photosynthesis.  
(leaves, as verdant as emeralds, shine with potential,  
catching light to claim as their own)

Leaves will extend upwards, reaching for the light.  
This is so they can absorb more light for photosynthesis.  
(like clutching, desperate hands, they reach towards the sun,  
yearning for freedom, to have more, to be more)

The underside of the leaf is full of pores known as stomata.  
This allows oxygen to diffuse from the leaf into the atmosphere.  
(like the little holes in my mind, lost words, lost potential, lost forever,  
poetic voice diffused to make space for pure, cold logic)

Thin veins, made of xylem and phloem cells, run through the leaf.  
This can support and provide the leaf with rigid structure.  
(dead cells stretch across the leaf, lignin chains,  
imprisoning it, binding it to what it must be)

The stem, flower and roots – the different parts of the plant have many functions.  
The leaf's singular function – to provide for the plant.  
(I said "I can be everything" – the aspiring artist, the ambitious academic.  
yet this is who I am, providing for the ambitions of those who can't see all of me)

(but what if I could do it all, with no regret, no more grief?  
what if I wasn't just a poet or just a sad scientist?  
what if I could be the blooming flower and the vibrant leaf?  
could I have chosen not to choose, no opportunities missed?)

---

---

## They Planted Me to Bloom

by **SQ** (Whalley Range High School)  
**First Prize Winner**

They crossed dry lands with cracked bare feet,  
Where thornbush burned and dust would greet.  
The sun was cruel, the nights were wide,  
Yet they held on—La ilala ill Allah—with pride.

They drank from rivers lined with stone,  
Their backs the shade, their hearts alone.  
They smelled the earth in every breath,  
And praised their Lord in life and death.

I was born in rooms with scented air,  
Soft beds, bright screens, electric glare.  
But never knew the scent of rain,  
Or soil that clings like Allah's name.

They walked through winds that spoke in sand,  
That shaped their skin and carved the land.  
While I walk the streets with plastic trees,  
And call it life whilst on my knees—

Not in prostration, but on my phone,  
A thousand voices, yet alone.  
I skip my salah, delay my fast,  
Forget the roots that hold me fast.

My great grandmother, under smoky skies,  
Dreamt of green and dragonflies.  
Of mango trees and ocean waves,  
Of prayer mats and quiet graves.

She never felt the forest dew,  
Or smelled a rose just born and new.  
Yet here I am, in gardens wide,  
And still, I trade heaven for pride.

She planted me with a trembling hand,  
In softer soil, in freer land.  
With the Quran near and water clean,  
But I got lost in glassy screens.



O Sumaya, she calls from dust,  
Return to what you know and trust.  
The sky is still above your head,  
The grass still grows, the trees aren't dead.

Touch the bark, the mud, the sea,  
Hear the birds say Subhan Allah with glee.  
Smell the world your Lord once drew,  
Before the smoke and lies you knew.  
Pray with limbs that know the ground,  
Let silence be the only sound.

Walk barefoot on the earth at dawn,  
And know—for this, your blood lived on.  
The religion is yours, so hold it tight.  
Don't trade the stars for neon light.  
You are the flower; they were the womb—  
They died in drought... so you could bloom.

---

Centre for New Writing  
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures  
The University of Manchester  
Oxford Road  
Manchester M13 9PL

 centrefornewwriting  
 @newwritingMCR

[www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cnw](http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/cnw)

DW3975.06.25

