

WRITE ON

National
Literacy
Trust

ALCS

POEMS FROM
PROFESSIONAL
AUTHORS

GROWING

Nathan Thompson

They're all the same, these kids, these hooded thugs; they slur their slang
and take their drugs, they're pregnant underage. They run in gangs
and shout down quiet roads, these boozing-blatant tearaways,
I say, we keep them under curfew – let them be harangued.
And why? I watch the evening news with dinner on a tray –
reports of riots, teenage gunmen, good kids led astray.
And after school, when teens collect on corners eating chips,
I wonder where they hide their guns and if their crimes will pay.
Society must protect us from this wicked hoard of kids
and keep them under rigid thumbs until they all submit –
and they renounce their evil ways and stay within the flock,
rambunctious behavior must stop -

We're the future teachers, doctors and nurses
so why give us dirty looks and curses?
You say we're rioting
when in fact we're writing
essays – compendre?
Your words are perforated
and ready for a tearaway.
So fair play, get ready to get pwnd:
you say we run in gangs
when in fact we stay at home
and study hard to get good marks
and yeh, we make mistakes
but look in the right place
and you'll find our heart.
Catch us in the park
doing six tricks of parkour,
or flipping a skateboard,
or moving majestically across a dancefloor,
or in training ready to make a living
painting and decorating,
or placing a cake in the oven for baking,
or raising money for charity.
Oh, but I'm sorry,
I must be a criminal cos I wear a hoody?
Really, we're just people
and the majority of us are peaceful
and we don't need hate –
we need your recognition and praise
and help to get through these transitional days.



THINGS THAT WE HEAR EVERYDAY

Bridget Minamore

We've heard it all before:

Nice, but only sometimes.
Rude. Impolite.
Loud. Both their voices and the things they play, because music isn't as good nowadays and nowadays kids are lazy.
They don't want to work hard, don't want to go fast, they move slowly through school doing exams that aren't as hard as they were in our day but they still don't get the right grades. Education is getting much easier.
They don't know enough, don't learn enough, they're ignorant about everything except everything that's wrong.
The dress badly. Speak madly with words that don't make any sense to anyone who's sensible, and they always sound sad and look miserable. They hate everyone. Hate everything.
They're looters, shooters, stabbers, grabbers, criminals. Start drinking too young and behave as if the world owes them something. Think they deserve an opinion but they're immature, the kids of today, while still being far too mature for their age. Young people are such a big problem today. But most of all, they're all the same.

Heard it all before.
Every day,
another way,
we have heard it
all before and what we'd like,
most of all, is a change.

We are young.
We are not all the same.



MULTIPLE WINDOWS

Catherine Brogan

Granddad put the TV in a box at term time
His ten kids peeked through windows at Westerns
Now Westerners stare at multiple windows

Dad's stamp collection connected him globally
Aged eight, he found me a Kenyan pen pal in the library
Now I've more people on my Facebook than in my village

Dad ripened despite the spud diet,
We got chocolate if we were good in Mass
Now Noughties' children are fed disorders

Dad gets a free bus pass, eye test, a good pension
I worked the door aged eleven at the youth club disco
Now the young roost on bus shelters

When I was fourteen, dial up choked the land-line,
Friends teased chat room strangers on our family desktop
Today's two year olds thumb touchscreens on transport

Dad's university grant offcuts got him a clapped out car
My savings funded the '89 Renault for my first job
Now debt promises alloy wheels

Dad marched, boycotted, worked, volunteered, planted,
I keep the tradition and bring performing, tweeting, writing,
We all inherit the ingredients to solder our future,
We lick the leftover chip paper.



LOSING MY MIND?

Dean Atta

It was a secret between us, he told me
not to tell; that's when the silence fell.

No one in the family spoke about it;
a collective denial about their uncle,

brother, child. Was it pride that stopped
him asking for help? Sworn to secrecy,

I watched on helplessly, as he slowly lost
his sanity. He wasn't the same man

to me; the father figure he used to be.
The stories he told me would never add up;

two minus one and my uncle was gone.
In the hospital he looked worse than ever

but we hoped, in here, that he would get better.
Suddenly

we took this seriously, we were there for him.
Spoke openly. We're not dealing with this

perfectly but we're trying our best as a family.
It's always a taboo, whether it be you

or someone in your family, we suffer silently.
We don't realise that it's so common,

that mental health is such a huge problem.
Afraid that they'll judge us or our loved ones,

we don't tell our friends, our colleagues
or the system. We don't ask for help

when we truly need it, act like it's not real
until we believe it. Until it's too late, in hospital

or worse, died because of pride or denial;
that's somebody's child. Could be your uncle,

could be your dad, your mum, your aunt,
your sister, your son, your brother, your cousin.

It could be you. It has been me but I got help
when I needed it. My uncle was a warning

to me and I headed it. Speak up before
it's too late. Act now. Don't wait. Don't suffer

silently;
you'll never know how good life could be.

