

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

Sense's Creative Writing Competition

Here are all the pieces that were shortlisted for the competition. In some cases, we have published excerpts rather than the whole piece.

Best piece of writing by a deafblind child or young person

Winner

Jack Hodgson:

Deafblind

Being Deafblind is not a disability

It's an adventure

The unused path

Among so many

And only the best may take it

Being Deafblind is not a disability

It's a rollercoaster

The windy ups and downs

Anger to get off

We do not like it, but we live it

Being Deafblind is not a disability

It is a majestic eagle

Soaring the life

Only slowing down

To catch our prey

Being Deafblind is not a disability

It's a star ship
Just because we have no guidance system
Does not mean we can't find the moon
We are the future

Being Deafblind is not a disability
It is a whole life
Just because I among many cannot see nor hear
Does not mean we cannot reach the stars
Love Deafblind
Love life

Shortlisted

Rhys Fullick

Early Ernie and Late Kate

One night in Early Ernie and Late Kate's house, Early Ernie took Late Kate's alarm clock and set it for midnight, which is the time Ernie likes to get up. At midnight the alarm clock rang and woke Late Kate up. Late Kate realised it was midnight but couldn't get back to sleep. So in revenge Late Kate took the batteries out of Early Ernie's alarm clock and told her tickle monster to wake him up at midday. Early Ernie's alarm clock didn't ring and he slept till midday when he was woken up by the tickle monster.

This is how Early Ernie got up late and Late Kate got up early.

Shortlisted

Liam Midwood

A poem from his new book, *There's a traffic cone stuck on my head*

Ways to kill a wasp

You can burn `em with a laser,
Suffocate `em in your blazer
You can shoot 'em with a gun
Or keep 'em to scare your mum,
You can roast `em on a fire,
Or scorch `em with a magnifier.
You could use acid to burn `em,
Or put 'em in a lathe and turn `em
Mash `em like a potater,
kill `em with a cheese grater
You can drop `em from a plane
or flush `em down the drain.
You can splatter `em, batter `em,
Shatter `em or clatter `em
Or find something else to do
When the wasps come bothering you!

Award for the best piece of writing by a deafblind adult

Winner

Nicole Dryburgh

Excerpts from her book *The Way I See it*

(Excerpt one)

There are rules to reading this book

Do not give me pity – I don't need it.

Do not feel sorry for me – because I'm not sorry.

Do not give me sympathy – I don't want it.

Do not think poor girl – because I'm not.

Do not cry while reading this book – you'll make the pages wet.

Stick to these rules and we will get along great!

(Excerpt two)

Rainbow

Nothing helps; stop the pain
teardrops falling like acid rain.
Hearts are breaking, smiles are faking,
people pretending things are ok.
They don't live with it day after day.
Scared child in a brave face –
nowhere to run, no air no space –
It comes and goes, makes me a fighter
can ruin families but makes mine tighter.
It takes time to heal an open wound.
Sometimes it seems as if you're doomed.
Then you see a rainbow, shining bright.
That's what makes you decide to fight.
So whenever you're pulled down or feeling blue,
remember that the rainbow pulled you through.

Shortlisted

Colin Bennett

Excerpt from:

A visit to Royal Garden Party July 2008

What to wear? Readers maybe surprised to learn that I have a nice suit but strangely it's growing smaller. So I went along to Savile Row or rather the Hove branch which is known as Hove Red Cross shop. Amazingly, they had a smashing light-weight suit which fitted me like a glove. The ladies thought it was just the thing for the Garden Party and asked if I had a nice shirt to go with it. I told them I had plenty but they ignored that and produced an Italian silky job. Although I had many ties they insisted that I purchased this "special one". I was thus fully equipped for twenty quid (that's absolutely true). And

now to Alice. Ladies are required to wear hats and so this was an excuse for her to buy one. She bought a floppy pink one with masses of oriental fruit atop with a squirrel draped down the back. Fortunately before the Big Day the fruit was eaten and the squirrel escaped so we did not create the sensation I had feared....

Shortlisted

A Dark Tale

By Johnny Sealby

Wild roses were blooming in the hedge, harbingers of returning sea trout. Later in the year it would be salmon, when the corn turns golden as the old saying has it. The recent falling freshet would have carried irresistible invitations to come home to the waiting wanderers in the distant estuary. The early-summer night was not too bright, my wife told me. So I took my fishing rod down to the river bank at the end of the garden. Having adjusted my recently acquired hearing aid to the quiet of the night, I could hear again the chuckle of the river and the water vole venturing out.

“May I see your license, Sir!” The Water Bailiff’s voice was startling. Busy with the catch, I’d not heard his approach. He must be new, I thought, because most folk knew about my doings in the dark without a light and nobody called me Sir. “You’ll need to come up to the house,” I said and led the way. He kept very close as we went. There’d be no chance of escape I mused. Seemingly he hadn’t realised I was blind. Anyway, after I warned him to stride well over a deep drain, hidden in the thick grass he relaxed.

I’d forgotten my key, and when my wife answered the door bell, I explained that the Bailiff wanted to see a fishing licence. “Your what? Who are you?” she asked in a voice that comes out of a straight face. He probably thinks I’m poaching, dear” I quipped. “He’s probably right,” my wife said in the same

vein. But then she could not keep it up any longer and her merry laugh peeled forth.

We went in and found the licence. And, as the Bailiff's shift was about finished, he stayed to chat over bread and cheese and a mug of beer. One thing puzzled him. "Being totally blind, how do you manage to fish in the dark?" he wanted to know. We explained to him gently that if a blind person could do things during the day, he could equally do them at night without a light. Then he was concerned to know whether something couldn't be done for my condition. With an inward chuckle I let the not unfamiliar conversation run on. He was surely groping his way among quite new ideas.

We said "goodnight" with an invitation to come again.

Yes, a good night and we'd made a new friend.

Shortlisted

Carol Pollington

Happiness

I can no longer run for a bus
Or leap on a train.
I can't see a child's face
Nor hear their cries in the night.
And I can't see the stars in the sky.

But

I can still swig a pint,
Dine out with friends,
Laugh with my children,
Dream with my husband.

I can hear the waves roar,
Feel the sun on my face.
I can walk in the hills,
Smell the spring flowers.
And I can reach for the stars

Best piece of writing by a family member or carer of a deafblind person

Winner

Carly kelbrick aged 10, who has a brother with Cerebral Palsy and other disabilities.

Spring time

spring time
the birds are singing in the trees,
the buds and flowers are seen.
its springtime and the sun is out and everything is green.
its wonderful to feel the breeze,
smell the fragrance too!,
and see the trees so full of leaves and know the sky is blue.

Shortlisted

Tony Morton

Steven's story

(Excerpt)

Steven had developed the habit of self harm and continued to hit his head with his fist, hitting teeth and face with more force until, during the school holidays, Dad bought a motorcycle crash helmet in order to reduce the damage that was being done by this repeated punching himself. Dad had counted the number of blows struck, using a click counter, the result was some 3,000 punches per day, plus. This had obviously caused deep bruising to Steven. A bruise on his right temple was so deep that it took some 3 months before the bruising cleared. His knuckles and hands were so badly damaged; he was wearing gloves to protect his hands from the damage caused by punching teeth and biting his hands and wrists.

Steven is now a calm, independent young man who spends most of his time without wearing a helmet. He makes choices, listens to music which he enjoys. He walks about his Sense home at will and enjoys going out with Mum, Dad and Matthew on Sundays.

Steven has settled at the house and is making progress beyond all expectations. Thanks to the support of all the Staff at SENSE.

Any writer on the subject of deafblindness

Best piece by any writer on the subject of deafblindness

Sarah Hilary

A Shanty for Sawdust and Cotton

It's the smell of timber which draws Jake to the yard, that and the drumming in the soles of his feet when he passes the turning for the dry dock. They're building in the yard, working with hammers; the earth shakes in the same spot every time. He feels the breeze beating on sailcloth, the fast flicking of flags and, when the men are cutting wood, the froth and fizz of the saw.

After a week or so, Jake gets up the courage to enter the shipyard. He finds the big doors ajar, silence packed inside. It's lunchtime. The men are taking a break. Jake can smell pickles and cheese.

'Hello,' he offers, a question for anyone who might be around. He tests the gap in the doors, turning his body sideways to slip through. Slim as a cake slice, Jake, that's what his mother always says.

Dusty air crowds round him. Cautiously he feels his way to the heart of the yard where the timber scent is strongest. Here, bowed and arched, is the carcass of a new ship. He follows it with his fingers, smoothing the flats of both hands over the ribcage of wood, laying his lips to the climbing curve of the stern. The timber is unpainted, raw and warm beneath his cheek.

Ships have been built in this yard for decades, Jake's teachers have explained, many sailing to the West Indies for sugar and spices, cotton and rum. The ships brought slaves too, ill treated, kept in the dark below deck. Jake moves to a spot midway between prow and stern where he crouches, pulling in his head to look like the pictures his teachers painted of the slaves crammed one on top of another in the hold.

Jake swallows the boiled sweet he's been sucking as he straightens himself out.

He climbs the ladder of the ship's ribs until he reaches the highest point of the prow, where he balances with both hands clasped behind him around the square joist at his back. He opens his eyes wide and sticks out his chin, straining his shoulders forward as far as he can without falling, imagining the roll and thunder of the sea around him.

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Wally sees the boy enter the yard. It's midday. He's eating a sandwich and he figures if Jake wants to poke about it's no skin off his nose. The boy's been

hanging around for weeks, but this is the first time he's come inside. Wally doesn't want to scare him away. He looks like a nice kid, always sucking sweets, more alert than most his age, even the ones who can see and hear.

'That's Jake Campbell. Blind and deaf, but he gets along OK. Sharp as a tack.'

Wally approves of the way Jake behaves around the yard, respectful, taking care near the dry dock. He's got a sailor's feel for the sea, Wally sees that straightaway, from the roll in the boy's walk and the way he comes upright when he gets too near the edge. He has a sailor's eyes too, burnt blue by the sun.

Wally licks pickle from his chin, balancing the sandwich on the back of his hand. His fingers, twisted with arthritis, make a shelf ridged with knuckles where the crumbs collect.

The kid's climbing the ship. You'd never know he was blind, to watch him.

Wally's worked the yards all his life. He's a plain man. Wood's what he knows, not much more than that. He can tell oak from pine in a knock. Because of the arthritis he'll be finished soon but he can't complain, it's been a fair run. The only thing he wishes is that he'd been to sea in one of the ships he built. Too late for that now, with his hands the way they are, but Wally's not one for regret.

What's the kid up to? Dangerous-looking sport, but Wally keeps his own counsel. He doesn't want to startle Jake, for one thing.

'Look at him,' he thinks, seeing the smooth jut of the boy's chin, the slim span of his shoulders, strong fingers fastened behind his back. It's like he's growing out of the wood, a living part of the ship. Wally can smell the cotton-candy *clean* of him. He could teach Jake to handle a boat, just a small one. With those strong fingers and Wally's eyes—

They could set to sea, the deafblind boy and the old man whose hands are curling into claws, sail the sun together to the edge of the world.

Shortlisted

Judy Darley

Colours

You share colours with me through the textures that you wear,
the aromas in the air, the flavours you bring to my lips.

Red is sensuous, clinging silk; the heady scent of the wine;
the sweetness of glace cherries split in two.

Yellow is the slipperiness of your swimming costume; the sharp tang of
lemons;
the crumble of a custard cream.

Pink is a cloud of softest chiffon; the cloying inhalation of stargazer lilies;
the fluffy fruitiness of raspberry mousse.

Green is the woollen jumper you touch to my cheek; fresh new leaves in
spring;
peas bursting between my teeth.

Purple is the velvet of your evening jacket; the pleasing plumpness of overripe
figs;
a syrupy tot of Port drunk at dusk.

Orange is your cat's purring fur; the spice of cinnamon tickling my nose;
pickled ginger tantalising my gums.

Brown is warm, worn corduroy; the promises of rain-damp earth;
Fair Trade chocolate melting in my mouth.

Black is the slick leather of your stilettos; tarmac oozing in the heat;
liquorice grasping the back of my throat.

Grey is the roughness of your old cardigan; the exhalation of sun-warmed stones;

a cold metal spoon against my tongue.

White is the fragile gauze of your nightdress; the trailing memory of an extinguished flame; an icy mouthful of snow.

Blue. Blue is the touch of your hair as you lean in to kiss me; the taste of your skin still steaming from the shower; the smell of the sky above our balcony just after dawn.

Blue is my favourite colour of all.

Shortlisted

Gillian Rathbone

Casting her vote

I note she feels for the slot
in the ballot box
and wonder at
her independence.

was she born without her sight
or did it happen
when she began to age
and if this was the case
did she fear at the time
she'd lose her very self as well
did she worry about folk
poking into her affairs
and did she think about
what it would be like when old

and when she turns to where

her husband waits to take her home

I wonder if she feels alone