

99th Abermain Eisteddfod Speech Set Pieces 2016

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MULGA BILL'S BICYCLE

.....A.B. PATERSON

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that caught the cycling craze;
He turned away the good old horse that served him many days;
He dressed himself in cycling clothes, resplendent to be seen;
He hurried off to town and bought a shining new machine;
And as he wheeled through the door, with air of lordly pride,
The grinning shop assistant said, "Excuse me, can you ride?"

"See here, young man," said Mulga Bill "from Walgett to the sea,
From Conroy's Gap to Castlereagh, there's none can ride like me.
I'm good all round at everything, as everybody knows,
Although I'm not the one to talk - I hate a man who blows."

"But riding is my special gift, my chiefest, sole delight;
Just ask a wild duck can it swim, a wild cat can it fight.
There's nothing clothed in hair or hide, or built of flesh and steel,
There's nothing walks or jumps, or runs, on axle, hoof or wheel,
But what I'll sit, while hide will hold and girths and straps are tight;
I'll ride this here two-wheeled concern right straight away at sight."

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that sought his own abode,
That perched above the Dead Man's Creek, beside the mountain road.
He turned the cycle down the hill and mounted for the fray -
But 'ere he'd gone a dozen yards it bolted clean away.
It left the track, and through the trees, just like a silver streak,
It whistled down the awful slope towards the Dead Man's Creek.

It shaved a stump by half an inch, it dodged a big white-box;
The very wallaroos in fright went scrambling up the rocks,
The wombats hiding in their caves dug deeper underground,
But Mulga Bill, as white as chalk, sat tight to every bound.
It struck a stone and gave a spring that cleared a fallen tree,
It raced beside a precipice as close as close could be;
And then, as Mulga Bill let out one last despairing shriek,
It made a leap of twenty feet into the Dead Man's Creek.

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that slowly swam ashore:
He said, "I've had some narrer shaves and lively rides before;
I've rode a wild bull round a yard to win a five-pound bet,
But this was sure the derndest ride that I've encountered yet.

I'll give this two-wheeled outlaw best; it's shaken all my nerve
To feel it whistle through the air and plunge and buck and swerve.
It's safe at rest in Dead Man's Creek - we'll leave it lying still:
A horse's back is good enough henceforth for Mulga Bill."

A Poem for Tourists.... Jan Turner-Jones

Welcome to Australia Fair, A land that's young and free.

Yes, come and have a holiday With Gertie, by the sea.

We own the world's most-deadly snakes And spiders full of fight

And jellyfish that do you in - Excitement day and night!

Our coast-line is beyond compare - A thousand surging rips,

Our sharks can smell you miles away - They smile and lick their lips!

If snorkling is your bag of tricks, Then swim without a care,

But while you're checking coral reefs Just check your boat's still there.

Our Drop-Bears are the worst of all With heavy snapping jaws

And though Koalas seem quite cute, Be cautious - razor claws!

And please beware, take extra care, of things we label "BIG "-

The BIG Banana, BIG Merino, Prawn or Boot or Pig!

We've never let the secret out But Aussies know it's true

There's tourists trapped inside BIG things Who never make it through!

Just think of all the gory tales You'll have to take back home -

Adventures underneath the sun For folks who never roam.

Yes welcome to Australia Fair And please enjoy your stay,

We promise hours of fun and sun - So happy holiday!

The Apple Raid Vernon Scannell

Darkness came early, though not yet cold;
Stars were strung on the telegraph wires;
Street lamps spilled pools of liquid gold;
The breeze was spiced with garden fires.

That smell of burnt leaves, the early dark,
Can still excite me but not as it did
So long ago when we met in the park -
Myself, John Peters and David Kidd.

We moved out of town to the district where
The lucky and the wealthy had their homes
With garages, gardens, and apples to spare
Ripely clustered in the trees' green domes.

We chose the place we meant to plunder
And climbed the wall and dropped down to
The secret dark. Apples crunched under
Our feet as we moved through the grass and dew.

The clusters on the lower boughs of the tree
Were easy to reach. We stored the fruit
In pockets and jerseys until all three
Boys were heavy with their tasty loot.

Safe on the other side of the wall
We moved back to town and munched as we went.
I wonder if David remembers at all
That little adventure, the apples' fresh scent.

Strange to think he's fifty years old,
That tough little boy with scabs on his knees;
Stranger to think that John Peters lies cold
In an orchard in France beneath apple trees.

Watch your Teacher Carefully - David Harmer

It happened in school last week
when everything seemed fine,
assembly, break, science and spelling
three twelves are four times nine.

But then I noticed my teacher
scratching the skin from her cheek
a forked tongue flicked from her lips
her nose hooked into a beak.

Her twenty arms grew longer
they ended in terrible claws
by now she was orange and yellow and green
with crunching great teeth in her jaws.

Her twenty eyes were upon me
as I ran from the room for the Head
got to his office, burst through the door
met a blood-sucking alien instead.

Somehow I got to the staffroom
the doorknob was dripping with slime
inside were seven hideous things
who thought I was dinnertime.

I made my escape through a window
just then a roaring sound
knocked me over flat on my face
as the whole school left the ground.

Powerful rockets pushed it
back into darkest space all I have left are the nightmares
and these feathers that grow on my face.

Anzacs Bartlett Adamson

By purple hills and opalescent sea
And sunlit leagues of plain they lived, and they
Were summery-hearted all, and life was gay,
And peace was theirs, and love, and liberty.
And when the clarion sounded suddenly,
They went, a rollicking band of boys at play
Tilted at doom, and there, at Anzac Bay,
Died...but they taught the world what men they be.

And Anzac now is an enchanted shore;
A tragic splendor, and a holy name;
A deed eternity will still acclaim;
A loss that crowns the victories of yore;
A glittering golden dome for evermore
Shining above the minarets of fame

Travel Sickness.....Colin Thompson and Peter Viska

The dog's just been sick in the Honda
and my dad says he's phoning the vets,
And if he lives to a hundred and fifty
we're not having any more pets.

The dog hung his head and looked guilty
Something went through its thick brain,
Mum cleaned it up with some tissues
then it turned round - and threw up again!

Dad nearly drove up a lamp post
He screamed and threw open the door,
We all got out onto the pavement
but the dog stayed inside...and did more.

Dad tore his hair and went purple,
Mum said, "Don't make a fuss!"
And while Dad was having a breakdown I took the dog home on the bus
(Where it wasn't sick at all!)

ALLCOMERS OPEN

SECTION 314 Set Piece

RECRUITING by E.A. Mackintosh

'Lads, you're wanted, go and help,'
On the railway carriage wall
Stuck the poster, and I thought
Of the hands that penned the call.

Fat civilians wishing they
'Could go and fight the Hun.'
Can't you see them thanking God
That they're over forty-one?

Girls with feathers, vulgar songs –
Washy verse on England's need –
God – and don't we damned well know
How the message ought to read.

'Lads, you're wanted! Over there,'
Shiver in the morning dew,
More poor devils like yourselves
Waiting to be killed by you.

Go and help to swell the names
In the casualty lists.
Helps to make the column's stuff
For the blasted journalists,

Help to keep them nice and safe
From the wicked German foe.
Don't let him come over here!
'Lads, you're wanted – out you go.!

There's a better word than that,
Lads, and can't you hear it come
From a million men that call
You to share their martyrdom?

Leave the harlots still to sing
Comic songs about the Hun,
Leave the fat old men to say
Now we've got them on the run.

Better twenty honest years
Than their dull three score and ten,
Lads, you're wanted. Come and learn
To live and die with honest men.

You shall learn what men can do
If you will but pay the price,
Learn the gaiety and strength

Take your risk of life and death
Underneath the open sky.
Live clean – or go out quick

Lads, you're wanted. Come and die.

SECTION 321 Set Piece

BAD DAY AT THE ARK by Roger McGough

On the eleventh morning
Japheth burst into the cabin;
'Dreadful news, everybody, the tigers
have eaten the bambanolas!'

'Oh, not the bambanolas,' cried Mrs Noah.
'But they were my favourites,
all cuddly and furry
and such beautiful brown eyes.'

Noah took her hand in his,
'Momma, not only were they cute
but they could sing and dance
and speak seven languages.'

'And when baked, their dung was delicious.'
added Shem wistfully.
Everybody agreed that the earth
Would be a poorer place without the bambanolas.

Noah determined to look on the bright side.
'At least we still have the quinquasaurapods.'
'Oh yes, the darling creatures,' said his wife.
'How would be manage without them?'

On deck, one quinquasaurapod was steering,
cooking, fishing, doing a crossword
and finding a cure for cancer.
The other was being stalked by a tiger.

15 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 327 Restricted Set Piece

TIGER by Leslie Norris

He stalks in his vivid stripes
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

He should be lurking in shadow
Sliding through long grass,
Near the water hole
Where plump deer pass.

He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorizing the village!

But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.

He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.

14 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 332 Open Set Piece

'I AM' by John Clare

I am – yet what I am, none cares or knows;
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:-
I am the self-consumer of my woes; -
They rise and vanish in oblivion's host,
Like shadows in love's frenzied stifled throes:-
And yet I am, and live – like vapours tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise, -
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life or joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
Even the dearest, that I love the best
Are strange – nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes, where man hath never trod
A place where woman never smiled or wept
There to abide with my Creator, God;
And sleep as I in childhood, sweetly slept,
Untroubling, and untroubled where I lie,
The grass below – above, the vaulted sky.

8 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 367 Open Set Piece

The Drinking FountainKenn Nesbitt

The drinking fountain squirted me.
It shot right up my nose.
It felt as if I'd stuck my nostril
on the garden hose.

It squirted water in my eye
and also in my ear.
I'm having trouble seeing
and it's really hard to hear.

The water squirted east and west.
It squirted north and south.
Upon my shirt, my pants, my hair,
but nothing in my mouth.

I'm sure that soon they'll fix it
but, until then, let me think.....
just whom can I convince that they
should come and have a drink?

9 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 363 Restricted Set Piece

SKIMPILY RED by Celia Gentles

I've never seen Miss Nixon
so flustered or so vexed
as when I saw her picking up
a pair of pants in Next.

Miss Nixon's rather strict and prim.
She teaches us R.E.
The knickers she was purchasing
were silk and r-e-d.

I grinned at her. She put them back,
looked guilty as a thief.
I couldn't help but notice
They were very, very brief.

Her eyes met mine. She gave me such
a long hard icy stare,
And said 'Will Johnson! Why are you
In Ladies Underwear?'

As scarlet as those skimpy pants
I felt my face grow red.
Then Mum looked up, peered round
the stand.
'My son's with me,' she said.

9 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 364 Local Restricted Set Piece

I DON'T WANT TO SHRINK by Robin Mellor

I don't want to get smaller,
I don't want to shrink,
if I wash too much I'll be
washed down the sink.
Mum keeps on saying
"Go and have a good wash."
but if I'm clean all the time
I'll look shiny and posh.
Have you seen what happens
to soap in the bath?
it gets smaller and smaller,
no . . . don't laugh,
it isn't funny to be washed away,
to get withered and wrinkled,
to disappear down the sink.
I don't want to get smaller,
Dirt does me no harm,
I don't want to shrink. Anyway,
Dirt keeps me warm.

10 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 356 Special Restricted Set Piece

MARMALADE by Peter Dixon

He's buried in the bushes,
with dockleaves round his grave,
A crimecat desperado
and his name was Marmalade.
He's the cat that caught the pigeon,
that stole the neighbour's meat . . .
and tore the velvet curtains
and stained the satin seat.
He's the cat that spoilt the laundry,
he's the cat that spilt the stew,
and chased the lady's poodle
and scratched her daughter too.

But –

No more we'll hear his cat flap,
or scratches at the door,
or see him at the window,
or hear his catnap snore,

So –

Ring his grave with pebbles,
erect a noble sign –
For here lies Marmalade
and Marmalade was MINE.

11 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 353 Local Restricted Set Piece

THERE ARE ZEBRAS ON THE CEILING by Jack Prelutsky

There are zebras on the ceiling
dancing upside-down ballet.

A giraffe is in the foyer,
and it will not go away.

There's a chicken in the kitchen
playing checkers with a quail,
And a turtle's running races
with a very speedy snail.

My father's growing feathers,
and my mother's ten feet tall.
A weasel and a wallaby
are whistling on the wall.
The cheese has turned to butter,
and the butter's turned to bread.
The tub is full of buzzards,
and a bear is in my bed.

The furniture is shrinking,
and the den has disappeared.
My sister's sprouting antlers,
and the puppy has a beard.
A marmoset is marching
with a mallard and a mouse.
It's another normal Monday –
I just *love* it at our house!

11 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 352 Restricted Set Piece

MAD WEATHER WE'RE HAVING by Kaye Umansky

It's raining cats and dogs again,
It said so on the news.
Last Sunday it rained penguins.
On Monday, kangaroos.

On Tuesday, it was froggy,
On Wednesday, cold as mice,
On Thursday, it snowed polar bears
(Which wasn't very nice).

Friday was a fowl day,
Saturday was bats,
And now we're back to Sunday
With a load more dogs and cats.

I'd like to stay here talking
But I'm soaked right to the skin.
Now it's blowing up a buffalo!
I think I'm going in.

10 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 354 Open Set Piece

A TEENAGE HIPPOPOTAMUS by Jack Prelutsky

A teenage hippopotamus
is living overhead.
I hear him every morning
when he bumbles out of bed.
He crashes through his living room
And makes my ceiling shake.
A teenage hippopotamus
Is very hard to take.

That teenage hippopotamus
Is louder than a train.
He loves to blast his radio,
It's driving me insane.
He keeps it on around the clock,
It blares and blares and blares –
I'm moving to the place next door,
Where lions live upstairs.

12 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 344 Open Set Piece

TURN OFF THE TV! by Bruce Lansky

My father gets quite mad at me;
my mother gets upset –
When they catch me watching
Our new television set.

My father yells, "Turn that thing off!"
Mom says, "It's time to study."
I'd rather watch my favorite TV show
with my best buddy.

I sneak down after homework
and turn the set on low.
But when she sees me watching it,
my mother yells out, "No!"

Dad says, "if you don't turn it off,
I'll hang it from a tree!"
I rather doubt he'll do it,
'cause he watches more than me.

He watches sports all weekend,
And weekday evenings too,
While munching chips and pretzels –
The room looks like a zoo.

So if he ever got the nerve
To hang it from a tree
He'd spend a lot of time up there –
Watching it with me.

13 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 340 Local Restricted Set Piece

OH, PLEASE ... by Rowena Sommerville

Oh, please –
let me be in your team,
let mine be the name that you pick,
don't leave me to mope at the edge of the field,
resenting each jump and each kick;

I promise, I'll run like the wind,
I'll twist and I'll turn and I'll pass,
I'll dazzle defenders with sparkle and speed,
you won't see my boots touch the grass;

Or maybe, I'll play at the back,
as solid and strong as a wall,
frustrating all forwards who dare to attempt
the slightest approach with the ball;

But –
each time they play, it's the same,
I'm left on the line, in the cold,
they never allow me to join in the game,
they always say,
'Gran, you're too old!'

12 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 345 Special Restricted Set Piece

OZYMANDIAS by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

SECTION 338 Restricted Set Piece

If you Chance to see a Dolphin
.....Richard Tulloch

If you chance to see a dolphin when you're going for a swim,
Please smile and nod politely, for it might be my friend, Jim,
Who's a very friendly creature, and wears a great big grin
While he plays his underwater games with all his finny kin.

He can talk, oh yes he can, I'm sure you've heard of that,
Though I guess you may have never overheard his sort of chat.
He squeaks and clicks and whistles and makes a quiet sort of moan,
He can talk to other dolphins in a language all their own.

He'll play games with human swimmers and with any passing ship
But one fish out there in the sea always gives our Jim the pip.
The Sneaky Shark, now there's a fish who makes happy dolphins cross
They'll attack these chaps, and chase them off, to show them who's the boss.

So if you're swimming in the sea and dolphins are there too,
You probably won't see a shark, but my advice to you
is : Make VERY SURE they're dolphins and not sharks you've seen
Because sharks are often hungry, and when they are they're mean.

14 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 334 Special Restricted Set Piece

The Ghost Teacher by Allan Ahlberg

The school is closed, the children gone,
But the ghost of the teacher lingers on.
As daylight fades, as the daytime ends,
As the night draws in and the dark descends,
She stands in the classroom, as clear as glass.
And calls the names of her absent class.

The school is shut, the children grown,
But the ghost of the teacher, all alone,
Puts the date on the board and moves about
(As the night draws on and the stars come out)
Between the desks – a glow in the gloom –
And calls for quiet in the silent room.

The school is a ruin, the children fled,
But the ghost of the teacher, long-time dead,
As the moon comes up and the first owls glide,
Puts on her coat and steps outside.
In the moonlit playground, shadow-free,
She stands on duty with a cup of tea.

The school is forgotten – children forget –
But the ghost of the teacher lingers yet.
As the night creeps up to the edge of the day,
She tidies the Plasticine away;
Counts the scissors – a shimmer of glass –
And says, 'Off you go!' to her absent class.

She utters the words that no one hears,
Picks up her bag...

and

disappears.

Noah's Ark Clive Sansom

Noah called out to the beasts of the jungle:

"It's going to rain like fun!

Look at the clouds there, look at the sky,

And look at that fiery sun!

Hurry aboard while there's time, me lads,

There's room for the kangaroo,

The mouse and the moose, the elk and the elephant.

Walk up, two by two!"

So along came a great procession of animals,

The grandest ever seen,

With two at the front of it, two at the back,

And a hundred twos between.

They walked and they hopped and they trotted up the gangway.

"Welcome, girls and boys!

You'll find all the food and fodder you need -

But - don't make too much noise!"

The Gerbil Tony Bradman

1) "Can we have a Gerbil, Mum?"

"We can't," is what Mum said.

"I'm sorry, love," she added.

"I'm having a baby, instead."

2) "I'd rather have a Gerbil, Mum,

I'd like a pet," I said.

"But what I'll get is a baby,

With a face all screaming and red."

3) "I'll tell you what," said Mother

"I'll tell you what we'll do.

If you help me with the baby,

You can have a Gerbil, too.

4) I got the Gerbil I wanted,

And I help Mum every day,

The baby isn't too bad -

But the Gerbil's quieter, I'd say.

7 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 377 Local Restricted Set Piece

FOUR O'CLOCK FRIDAY by John Foster

Four o'clock Friday, I'm home at last.
Time to forget the week that's past.
On Monday, in break they stole my ball
And threw it over the playground wall.
On Tuesday afternoon, in games,
They threw mud at me and called me names.
On Wednesday, they trampled my books on the floor,
So Miss kept me in because I swore.
On Thursday, they laughed after the test
'Cause my marks were lower than the rest.
Four o'clock Friday, at last I'm free,
For two whole days they can't get at me.

6 YEARS & UNDER OPEN

SECTION 378 Open Set Piece

CAT by Vernon Scannell

My cat has got no name,
We simply call him Cat;
He doesn't seem to blame
Anyone for that.

For he is not like us
Who often I'm afraid,
Kick up quite a fuss
If *our* names are mislaid.

As if, without a name,
We'd be no longer there
But like a tiny flame
Vanish in bright air.

My pet, he doesn't care
About such things as that:
Black buzz and golden stare
Require no name but Cat.

SECTION 382 Special Restricted Set Piece

YOU CAN'T MAKE ME EAT THAT by Jack Prelutsky

You can't make me eat that,
it's slimy and gooey
and icky and yucky
and greasy and gluey.
It looks like you made it
from maggots and mud,
some chopped hippopotamus,
bugs heads and blood.

I hate it, I hate it,
I hate it to bits!
Just thinking about it
is giving me fits.
One taste and I'm certain

I'll instantly die . . .
You can't make me eat that,
So don't even try.

5 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 384 Restricted Set Piece

IF YOU SHOULD MEET A CROCODILE . . . by Anon

If you should meet a crocodile,
Don't take a stick and poke him;
Ignore the welcome in his smile,
Be careful not to stroke him.
For as he sleeps upon the Nile,
He thinner gets and thinner;
And whene'er you meet a crocodile
He's ready for his dinner.

5 YEARS & UNDER

SECTION 386 Special Restricted Set Piece

SNOWBALL by Shel Silverstein

I made myself a snowball
As perfect as could be.
I thought I'd keep it as a pet
And let it sleep with me.
I made it some pajamas
And a pillow for it's head.
Then, last night it ran away.
But first -- it wet the bed.