

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Challenging Prejudice and Celebrating Diversity

Creative writing
by sixth class

**Our Lady of
Mercy Convent
School,
Boooterstown**

Teagan O'connor Yashvi Vora Sarah Connolly
Cathy Kennedy Lara Fitzpatrick Molly
Isabel O'Reilly Amy O'Halloran
Eloise murray
Sophie Lawrence Ilenia Mohan Patel
-Sophie Kelly- Lola Field Shania Telliers
Alexandra Tolly VALENTINA JIMÉNEZ Bajek
jessica carroll Rafaela Batista Moliane
Gordelia Caton Zahra
Shweta Suresh Ruby Kearns
-Rosaleen Saul-Rotne- Sophia Hediganü





FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write a foreword for this wonderful series of books that challenge prejudice and celebrate diversity in so many vibrant and thought-provoking ways. Our dynamic libraries in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown always strive to be catalysts for the imagination, thereby encouraging and inspiring creativity. What better way than through such an inclusive and stimulating creative writing project devised by author Debbie Thomas between Winter 2021 and Spring 2022.

Debbie is a best-selling writer of five children's books, and she runs creative writing and story workshops in all sorts of places from schools and libraries to hospitals and direct provision centres. She is currently the Writer in Residence at Crumlin Children's Hospital and she loves encouraging children to write for fun. She uses creative writing to explore this world and other worlds and to highlight and celebrate **A World of Difference.**

A big thank you to Debbie, all the class teachers and school principals and most especially the enthusiastic and endlessly creative students at All Saints, Blackrock, Monkstown Educate Together, Oliver Plunkett School, Monkstown, Our Lady of Mercy, Booterstown, St. Joseph's National School, Tivoli Road and St. Nicholas Montessori, Dún Laoghaire.

I know you will enjoy reading these powerful poems and stories and the accompanying artwork as much as I did!

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Lettie McCarthy
February 2022





INTRODUCTION

Creative writing is a powerful weapon against prejudice. Stories and songs, poems and plays help us step into other people's shoes and see the world from different viewpoints. In two workshops during spring term 2022, sixth class pupils at Our Lady of Mercy Convent School explored the causes of, and cures for, prejudice through discussion and writing. You can read their wonderful work here.

Congratulations to all the children who participated over Zoom – no easy task – and who wrote such joyful pieces on this serious subject. Many thanks to Carmella Parkinson for facilitating with great patience and efficiency through a screen. And finally, a huge thank you to Dr. Marian Keyes, Senior Executive Librarian at dlr Lexlcon, tireless champion of all things creative and the queen of can-do. It's been a privilege to work with you all.

Debbie Thomas
February 2022

YOURS SINCERIOUSLY

Prejudice often stems from fear or ignorance. It's easy to judge unfairly or jump to the wrong conclusions when we're scared or don't understand a person or a group ... or even an animal. Imagine stepping into the paws, claws, scales or tails of the creature you fear or dislike the most. Imagine if that creature wrote you a letter.

Sarah Connolly

6th Class

Dear Sarah,

I hope you are well because I'm not. Everybody discriminates against me. This is not acceptable and I would like this matter to change. I'm quite big and fat but that's just my body. I don't harm anyone, just scare them. The way you humans treat me is awful – when you see me, you scream and run away. I hate this. You make me feel like a giant, even though I fit into your palm. I wish you'd treat me like a puppy or a kitten. Please think about this and change your ways. I have very poor living conditions and I only go out to hunt flies down. Please stop thinking this way because it hurts my feelings. I hope to change your actions. Thank you.

Cockroach.



Lola Field

6th Class

Dear Lola,

I am writing to you to discuss your secret hatred of me. All these years I thought you liked me and my species. I feel betrayed and disappointed.

I honestly don't know how someone could hate or fear an innocent spider like me. I know we have lots of legs and eyes, maybe a little hair too, but the way we look doesn't affect the way we act. Just because we have scary features doesn't mean they can't benefit you. For example, our eyes can come in handy a lot more than you think. If you connect a high-tech mini-camera to our heads, then bomb – you have a free security camera! See what I mean?

Unfortunately, not many people think about our benefits. We're treated like pieces of rubbish. I've been thrown out of so many houses, out into the freezing cold. How do you think that makes me feel? I wish people would recognise the amazing talents and skills we have. In future, I hope to be in the corner of a warm, cosy house, relaxing. Not – you know – in the corner of a roof, outside in the cold ... suffering.

I hope this letter convinces you that we're not as bad as we seem.

Sincerely,

Spider.

Dear Miss Fitzpatrick,

I am Cassy the mouse. I live in your sitting room and I recently heard you talking rudely about me and my family. I cannot understand why humans are so afraid of us. We are perfectly clean and hygienic and we keep to ourselves, yet humans still scream at the rare sight of us. It hurts us greatly because we feel unwanted and are treated like vermin.

We even help you clean up. Your waste is our food. Any crumb or pile of unwanted food is our treasure. We clean up all the mess you leave in the kitchen. Thank God we do because otherwise you would be covered in food.

How can you be afraid of us if you rarely even see us? During the day we keep to our den but when the sun sets and all is quiet we are out scavenging for food. It is like the saying, 'When the cats are away, the mice will play' – except we do not play, we risk our own lives to find whatever food we can before you come down and put those terrible traps out. It takes a while to clean up all your mess. We would greatly appreciate it if you gathered it all into designated piles. Or you could tell your family not to go down to the kitchen for a drink in the middle of the night. The other day my son Alfred nearly got seen by your thirsty brother. I got the fright of my life at the thought of you laying out those horrible traps again. One of them killed my sister two years ago.

We are perfectly hygienic. If we get dirty, we lick ourselves clean. If any of us get fleas, they isolate for two weeks in one of the special dens we have dug in your wall.

In conclusion, I do not see why humans are scared of us. We are hygienic, we clean your house and we only come out at night.

Yours sincerely, Cassy





Sophia Hedigan

6th Class

Dear Sophia,

I am a rat and I hear you have a strong dislike towards me. I have met a lot of human beings in my time and I understand why you might be scared or disgusted. Sadly, you don't understand how great we rats are. You may see us as hairy monsters or some piece of junk but we don't feel that way about you. Our fur is absolutely amazing after a bath. If you cuddled up to us it would make your mouth water. Even if you catch us inside your kitchen cupboard eating food, we're only doing that so we can survive and feed our families.

When you treat my family so badly, we feel useless and hide away. How would you feel if you had to run away from life? On behalf of all rats, I ask you to treat us better – maybe like a cat or a dog. My dream is to live a happy and safe life with my family. And my biggest fear? That one day my family won't come home.

Thank you for listening.

Ratatouille.

Valentina Jiminez Bajek

6th Class

Dear Valentina,

I understand your feelings when it comes to creatures like us. People hate our needle-like tongues that, according to your species, are used to suck out blood. But not every mosquito sucks out blood. You might find this shocking, but the truth is only females need blood to feed their larvae. Males prefer to get food from flowers and fruit. I know you'll say it's our fault that so many people have diseases such as yellow fever. But we mosquitos need blood to survive, so you're saying that we should die so that you can survive! Think how you'd feel to be swatted and murdered. We deserve some respect. You don't know how it feels to be scared every time you see someone. I fear for our future on this planet if, every day, more people hate us. We are not all terrible.

I hope you understand.

Yours sincerely,

Mosquito





Ruby Kearns

6th Class

Dear Ruby,

My name is Pinchy and I'm a seven-foot-long spider crab. I'm writing this letter because I have recently heard that you despise my wondrous – and let's not forget incredible – kind. I'm here to change your feelings about spider crabs. We're not poisonous and we don't attack humans. I live in a very modern home, a cave deep in the ocean, with my weird but wonderful family. Maybe one day you can pop in for food (I hope you like tiny raw shrimps). Please don't be scared of our appearance. We do try to look our best – we just can't grow hair or wear clothes. Even thinking about painting my claws with 'nail polish' gives me the heebie-jeebies! I would love to be friends with you because it gets boring down here in my dark, modern – and did I mention – state-of-the-art cave.

Hope to see you soon.

Pinchy

Amy O'Halloran

6th Class

Dear Amy,

I am writing to complain about how you humans treat me. All who come into my jungle run away screaming whenever I come out to say hello. How do you think that makes me feel? Just because I have scales and razor-sharp fangs doesn't mean that I am not nice.

You humans are always coming into my jungle – uninvited, I might add – with those loud machine things that cut down my beautiful trees. My family and I have had to move three times, deeper and deeper into the jungle, to avoid contact with your machines. I would like to be treated with a lot more respect and kindness in the not-so-distant future.

Cold regards, Slimy the snake

Rosaleen Saul Rotne

6th Class

Dear Rosaleen,

A lot of people don't like me because of my slithery style of swimming and long sleek body. You may also be scared of me because you've heard of my electrocuting cousin. But you have nothing to fear from me. I'm just a sea creature that looks a bit different from the others and I just happen to have an electrical background.

Humans don't really bother me. It's just that when they see me they scream and run away. I want them to let me swim peacefully by and not get torpedoed. I want people to stop taking my friends and saying something about dinner. I have no idea what that means. I would like to be respected but I'm worried you will always be afraid of me.

Dave Eelen





DON'T JUDGE ME

Never mind a book, let's not judge each other by our covers.

Alexandra Jolly

6th Class

Don't judge me by my clothes,
Don't judge me by my smile,
Don't judge me by my nose
Or a treat once in a while.

Judge my generosity,
The way that I behave.
Judge my personality,
For that you cannot change.

Ilenia Mohan Paul

6th Class

Don't judge me by my culture
Because that's who I am.
Don't judge me by my looks –
The colour of my skin,
My face or height or dress –
Because that is how I'm made.

Judge me by my personality –
Kindness,
Courage,
Thoughtfulness -
The things that make me
And my personality.
Judge me by my good side
Then you won't hurt my feelings.

Sophie Lawrence

6th Class

Don't judge me by my hair
Or by the way I dress.
Don't pretend that you don't care
Even when I look a mess.

Judge me by my character,
My kindness, hope and joy,
My goofiness and happiness
That no one will destroy.

Teagan O'Connor

6th Class

Don't judge me by my hair
Don't judge me by my looks
Don't judge me if I carry round
A hairbrush, pen or books.

Please judge me by my kindness
And what good things I've done,
My honesty and helpfulness
And not how fast I run.

This is me,
This is me.
I won't change for you
Or it, he or she -
And there's nothing you can do.





WHERE I BELONG

To accept other people, we need to feel accepted ourselves. Everyone longs to belong: to a group or a person, a family, a friend or a place.

My Safe Place

Zahra Deasy

6th Class

I love the snow, the feeling of holiday,
Bustling about, all of us together.
The plane to Switzerland,
Raspy French and hot food stands.
Hot chocolate and chips for a break
Then back to the mountains to ski down like snakes.
The ski lift swinging so high in the air,
Warm coats and orange juice, my friends all there,
The bowling alley, poker games and helmet-flattened hair
Movies and cosy socks,
Restaurants and sweet shops.
I love it so much.

Safe

Eloise Murray

6th Class

I'm in a field, safe,
I see flowers and grass,
The sky and sheep.
I hear cows mooing,
The wind blowing,
Alone in my secret space.

Loved

Sophie Kelly
6th Class

Standing here, being loved
In my grandparents' home.
The old brown floor
And the microwave,
The picture of saints
And the cluttered countertops.
All I hear is voices
And dogs barking, paws trotting
Around the floor.
Oh what wonder
Must be in a dog's head.
The old chairs squeak,
The smell of fresh breakfast
Flows through the house.
Everyone is talking
About the GAA.
What a time
To be alive.

Not Alone

Cathy Kennedy
6th Class

I feel safest in my bedroom, reading,
Quiet and calm.
There's my bed with the green duvet crinkling,
My brown and white desk,
My wardrobe and shelves,
The curtains and beanbag in matching pink.
I smell the rosewater diffuser,
Hear the birds outside.
A family walking by
Makes me feel alone
Until I remember I'm reading –
With a book, I'm never alone.





In the library

Cordelia Caton

6th Class

When I'm in the library
Between the bookshelves
Sitting in an armchair
I hear the tapping of a keyboard
The clicking of a mouse
And whispers all around.
A smell of fresh books is in the air
And tea and coffee.
Sitting and reading with my brother next to me.
That's what I hear, smell and see
In between the bookshelves
In the library.

Sailing

Molly O'Flaherty

6th Class

Get the sail, get the rope,
It is time to sail the boat.
My friends are laughing at a joke.
We get in the water,
Hear seagulls talking.
We're quiet for a minute,
Listening.
Waves are crashing,
People are passing.
We hear a whistle,
'Come back to shore.'

In my Bedroom

Isabel O'Reilly

6th Class

I see through the window
The glistening moon and stars.
Blue lights circle
Around my walls.
I hear beautiful trees
Swaying in the wind.
Strawberry perfume fills the room.

My cat is coming
Up to me.
Meowing for some attention.
I gently stroke her
Down her back and
Up her tail.
She hops on my bed and drifts into
A peaceful sleep.
I finish my book
And switch off my light.

In my Mind

Rafaela Batista
Moliane

6th Class

I can be everywhere I want
Where no one will change,
A place where everything
Is made out of candy.
I can see family and friends
I haven't seen in years.
I can hear music
And memories.
I can smell emptiness –
Not a bad smell. I like it.
I can be with the characters I've created.
I love spending time with them.





School

Yashvi Vora
6th Class

What do I see?
My friends are with me.
No offence, parents,
But with them I feel free.

When we have the best time
I think of something mischievous.
Then teacher figures it out
And the next step is the principal!

The playground is fun and noisy.
We enjoy it there the most.
When someone gets into trouble
We all exclaim, 'We're toast!'

We still have all our homework
When we finally go home
But for that there's a solution –
Just search on Google Chrome!

Safe in my Room

Shweta Suresh
6th Class

I see my closet door,
My brother's books on a shelf,
My small, messy bed
And the grassy back yard.
I hear the birds outside
And people walking by,
My playlist of favourite songs.
I feel a light breeze
Smell my raspberry candle,
By myself in my safe little room.

A Great Day

Jessica Carroll

6th Class

Sat in the sunroom
Playing card games
Chatting about our busy days
As the dog lays.
Among the endless fields
The trees sway
Outside the window bay.
The smell of lamb
Fills the room
While the fire crackles.
Then I hear a boom.
The rain begins
I lose the game.
But it's all OK.
It's been a great day.

Family

Shania Tellies

6th Class

When I'm by myself
I don't feel very strong
But when I'm with my family
I feel like I belong.

Everything seems brighter,
I feel so safe and sound
But when I'm all alone
I feel I can't be found.

When I'm with my family,
Roses fill the air
But when I'm all alone
I feel that I'm not there.



