

CHAMPIONSHIP – GIRLS 14 to 18 yrs (incl.)  
BOYS 15 to 18 yrs (incl.)

BIRD IN THE CLASSROOM by Colin Thiele

The students drowsed and drowned  
In the teacher's ponderous monotone –  
Limp bodies looping in the wordy heat,  
Melted and run together, desks and flesh as one,  
Swooning and swimming in a sea of drone.

Each one asleep, swayed and vaguely drifted  
With lidding eyes and lolling, weighted heads,  
Was caught on heavy waves and dimly lifted,  
Sunk slowly, ears ringing, in the syrup of his sound,  
Or borne from the room on a heaving wilderness of beds.

And then, on a sudden, a bird's cool voice  
Punched out song. Crisp and spare  
On the started air,  
Beak-beamed  
Or idly tossed,  
Each note gleamed  
Like a bead of frost.

A bird's cool voice from a neighbour tree  
With five clear calls - mere grains of sound  
Rare and neat  
Repeated twice.....  
But they sprang the heat  
Like drops of ice.

Ears cocked, before the comment ran  
Fading and chuckling where a wattle stirred,  
The students wondered how they could have heard  
Such dreary monotones from man,  
Such wisdom from a bird.

OR

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BOYS 15 to 18 yrs (incl.)

UNHALLOWED by Mavis Dowling

I went to the church and the preacher prayed,  
But I could not hark to a word he said,  
For something tapped on the window pane –  
Something stranger than drip of rain.  
I turned my head and I saw him there  
With a green plum'd cap on his tawny hair,  
A wee, small man in a leaf-brown coat,  
Tapping the pane with a pipe of oat;  
And the people bowed while the preacher spoke  
And I tried to pray, but my faint voice broke –  
Of a sudden there came a flash like flame,  
As the preacher uttered the Holy Name,  
And I heard a strange tune far away,  
Vanishing down in the misty brae.  
Piper and oat-pipe both had gone;  
But the elf-notes called me to follow on.  
And I could not pray and I could not sing,  
So I fled from the Kirk, an enchanted thing,  
Following down where the wee man played  
On his oaten pipe in a sea-green glade,  
For I knew that he'd stolen my soul away,  
And I needs must moan for the Judgment Day!