

Your Visit

Learning Resources

Poems for IWM North

Mario Petrucci is a poet who has been working with Imperial War Museum. This is a selection of his poems, which have been inspired by the collections at IWM and IWM North. All the pieces have inherent literacy and creative education potential built into them. These poems have been chosen because of their strong relevance to the themes of the Museum and many of the large objects.

Mario Petrucci is an experienced poet, teacher and Arvon tutor who has secured many commissions in radio and with the BBC. His poetry performances attract international recognition (for example, with the British Council) and he works widely in schools both as a freelancer and as a member of the Poetry Society/DfEE project Poetryclass. He is currently a Fellow of the Royal Literary Fund at Oxford Brookes University.

Mario is recognised for his emphasis on bi-cultural themes, and for his input to many literature events as ecologist, PhD physicist and war poet. He is the only poet to have been in residence at the **Imperial War Museum**, where he is now literacy consultant, inventing 'Multi-Captions' to generate responses among the public on a number of educational and aesthetic levels. He runs a variety of INSET courses for teachers that focus on war poetry and the use of museum space for school visits.

Mario has won major international awards, including the London Writers Competition, the Sheffield Thursday, the Bridport Prize and the prestigious Arts Council Writers' Award. Examples of his teaching materials, and of his innovative 'Poeclectic' approach to poetry, can be found in the books mentioned below. For further information on Mario Petrucci, or on Poeclectics, refer to: <http://mariopetrucci.port5.com>

Relevant publications:

Shrapnel and Sheets. A Poetry Book Society Recommendation, available from Headland, £6.95; 38 York Avenue, West Kirby, Wirral, L48 3JF. *War poems and family poems by the author.*

The Stamina of Sheep. Inspired by a Year-of-the-Artist project in Essex and Havering. *Poems designed for schools and creative writers, with an ambitious sensitivity to history, war and place.* This book also comes with a Study Pack for schools, crammed with original ideas for student activity. Described as 'an inspiring educational project'. Both books available via the web-site address.



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Mario Petrucci.
Poet-in-Residence; Literacy Consultant.

TRENCH

Sniper, Sniper, in your tree -
has your eye closed in on me?
Did your sights hot-cross my head
before you chose young Phil instead?
If looks could kill, would I be dead?

Sniper, Sniper, the one you get
doesn't hear your rifle crack.
They're saying here that you've the knack.

They're telling me I've lost a bet -
they say I'm dead. I just don't know it yet.



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BAYONETS FIXED

We, no common ground?
This earth made us, steel and bone.

Once, we strolled brine in brine
over silt and sediment. Entwined

our tails of incandescent blue
between cackling clouds. Pressed

as one we were, in time's book:
poppies of phosphorus, iron, zinc.

I, the boxfish kissing your coral.
You, the olive branch bearing

my ancestor. Friend, everything came
together to make us upright, warm.

Hold firm - soil looking on soil.
We will never happen again. Brother

of the same sun, how on earth withhold
an embrace? Or guide that bayonet home?

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STRONTIUM-90

(released during A-bomb tests, and now in all our bones)

On a balmed day when momentary cloud
blots the sun, there creeps a chill up the back
of your yard chair - till you sleep-feel what it is
the mushroomed vapour habitually scuds.

So it is, when common air goads the lungs
and clogs their sacs with crackling gobstoppers.
When bone follows, grows pregnant with worst luck -
who will look then to the cloud, and curse it?



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GENETIC WARFARE, 2012

Sir, this new weapon concept is 'The Guided Rump'.
You see, our boys found a bacterium in Majorca

able to concentrate Uranium from any toxic trash.
We spliced its genes with a boar from Alsace.

So now you parachute your crack team of porkers
behind enemy lines, straight onto radioactive dumps

and just let the swine eat their way to critical mass.



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Poet-in-Residence; Literacy Consultant.

QUESTIONS

What can I do
once it's already been done?

How can I act
now the curtain is down?

There's a shoe. A hat.
But where do I look

when it's on the TV
in black and white?

Is the victim long-dead?
Is there no turning back?

Written for the Holocaust Handbook (February 2000).

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POEMS FOR IWM NORTH LARGE OBJECTS

T-34/85 Soviet Tank

Check out my dimensions -
I'm a creature
of calibre.

In my factory cot
deep in Russian forest
the raw hands of boys

rocked me to sleep.
The hands of women.
Of old men.

For my rivets,
no colic. For my innards,
green quiet.

Yes. I fell asleep
to the sound of a shell.
Awoke in a stink of diesel.

For Germans I was
the can opener from Hell.
Led them to fields of rust.

I was still doing the rounds
not so very long ago.
My motto? You're dust.

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AV8A Harrier

Oi - are you calling me a plane?
A plane can't freeze at any height.
Or land on a roof. Look kid -
they call it Vector In Flight.
Me, I call it wicked.

So, watch it. 'Cos I can drop in
and see you in the City - know what
I mean? I'll remove you from your teacup
and not spill it. Won't need no taxi.
That's the truth. Straight up.

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FIELD GUN 'TAPE'

'STRING' or 'TAPE' POEM. Experimental Text with Multiple Internal Readings.

Within the string, words and statements disturbingly resolve, then redissolve. There are several ways of reading the string as a complete statement (using all the letters) but within each of these readings many 'local' rephrasings are possible.

Easy to link to mood, creative interpretation, writing and literacy exercises. Floor as a site of debate! Aesthetically evocative in its own right.

**IMASHELLISENDYOUJUSTICEASFIREACHINGOTTCHARONSKINDIMAIMEDEATHOPENAHIFIN-
ISHREDATATOUCHAGRINORPHANTOMILETINASHELLISHOTHERASTORMENTORSOLETRIP**

Mario Petrucci
137 characters

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FIELD GUN

RIDDLED

My first is in Ran**Ge**
and clearly in Si**Ght**.
I wish I could change
but my heart's in Assa**Ult**
and in the Ro**Ut**.

My end's in Defe**N**ce
(in **AN**ger too).
Do I make any sense?
(My aim can be true
and still be at fault.)

Must I spell it out?

"Rout" - frantic retreat, utter defeat.

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FIELD GUN

NICKNAMES

Mons Meg, Fat Man
Little Boy, Big Bertha.

You'd better watch out
calling us names. A joke
can drop like a stone,
stick in your throat.

Moaning Minnie, Willie Pusher
Devil, Mother.

Sure, we can slap a grin
on a daughter or son.
Does that help you feel
more human?

*Mons Meg - a great 15th-century cannon.
The other names refer to war artefacts held by the Museum across its sites.*

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HARRIER

AT NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM

Imagine a full moon. Clouds
drifting like old explosions.

Somewhere behind, a pipe ticks.
Above you - a black wing stirs

the pterodactyl in your stomach.
No pilot. No children. Just

dumb engines. And don't look down
into the ocean of dark or else

you'll feel a nosedive in your gut -
something like a jet

swallowing cold water.

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OTHER POEMS

Even this Earth
must give a little
at every step we take.
Can't you feel?

or hear our dead:
their tiny time-
shrunk moans
filtering up

through clay, loam
made dense with flesh
and bone - just
to support us?

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I am a fever
to touch - full charge
packed hard

Cram of fulminate -
I did not happen
by accident

I am myself
Need only a nudge
a hip's vibration

- the skip
of a heart-beat
is all I take

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Am I a wall
just a wall

in a Museum?
When it comes

to War I
might offer

shelter
I

can even
hold it up -

but
if you're looking

for blame
Don't

pin it on me

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STICK TO YOUR GUNS

Just stick to your guns!
- that's what they said to do.
And when it simply must be done
I'll stick to my guns too.

But sticking to our guns
when the score's nil-nil
is not like aiming sights
at a stranger on a hill.

What if we stuck to words?
Something might be won.
Buried voices can't be heard -
all those who stuck to guns.

Yet still we stick to guns
and so guns stick to us
and so a sniper shoots a man
for running for a bus.

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I'LL MISS

SI'L LMIS

SSI' LLMI

ISSI 'LLM

MISS I'LL

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D
LIFEBOAT
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H

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<i>warmed</i>	<i>best</i>	<i>friend</i>
<i>armed</i>	<i>beast</i>	<i>fiend</i>

What's the difference?

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GRENADE

FIVE SECONDS

to pick up the black fruit engorged
with seeds throw it back

FOUR SECONDS

to thread the pin back in
before the white-hot zodiac

THREE SECONDS

to claw and scabble at the sheer
cliff of a cul-de-sac

TWO SECONDS

to see your life time-lapse away
so much bric-a-brac

ONE SECOND

to crouch growling maniac

NOTHING

you're dud mouth
an open crack

Mario Petrucci