1. **Opening Extracts and Power Pose**

*Come onto stage one at a time, say extract then take position in Power Pose.  
All extracts to be learned by heart*

**Cass**

You told me this story when I was seventeen

And falling reluctantly in love with The Whitsun Weddings, in that

Stockholm-syndrome way you do with the poems they give to you to badly dissect so someone can give you an A-level

“He told me to fuck off once,” you said

“I was on the grass outside the library and I shouldn’t have been”

And you laughed, and shook your head, and left me

**Julie**

sometimes dragon, always phoenix

Mags has her flames

is a firebird

flares and sparkles

again and again and again

**Louise**

I am at war with myself and I will win,

               I will put on my war paint and go into battle.

**Vicky**

there’s the calm before the storm

There’s a breath and then the bell

And I’m waiting for her punch to land

Cos that leather glove will tell.

Once they’ve thrown the first punch

I’ll know what they’ve got

I’ll know if I can take it,

And by now, I’ll take a lot

**Kate**

Her gusset’s a gateway. She wears five parts of knickers, in fact her knickers are bigger than she is. Inside she’s glitter and glue.

**Lynda**

This was Hull where dreamers of dreams and seers of visions

wasted years [too long a span], dabbling with The Abbercrombie Plan.

A prodigious task to restore, our beloved city blitzed by the war.

**Michelle**

Take the armourer’s spike and prick the arse, bleed it dry of all that gas

It is not the proclamations you utter but the seeds you sow that matter

1. **“Queens of the North”**

*Three drum-beats, then “Queens of the North”*

*Each share our own three Queens of the North, one at a time (so three times round):*

**Cass**

My English teacher, Miss Hodgson, who read my first novel and di not laugh at me

The Anlaby Park librarians, who always welcomed me home

My great Auntie Anne, who was definitely a witch

**Julie**

Annabel Breeze Ride Leader and lighter of candles

Suzie Pipes Special Olympian

Trish a healer of wounds

**Louise**

Granny Kath: who always taught me to keep pushing on, and then died after intruders broke into her home.

Katy Beech: She once told me that in our last life together, she gave me her heart. So I now cherish hers.

Bob Fracklehurst – a secret name for my secret heart. A taxi driver in my novels, a sister in real life.

**Vicky**

Doreen Hutchinson: who biked to Whitby after she finished work at the weekends.

Sandra Waltham: who toiled late nights at desks after long days of work and filling teenage bellies.

Ethel Leginska: whose fingers danced her all the way from Hull to the international spotlight.

**Kate**

Jean Bishop: A tiny lady, a big bee.

Rosemary Reynard: My Step Mum ignoring everyone who said she should shun the personification of her husband’s affair

Lucy Beaumont’s funny bone: broadcasting laughs To Hull and Back

**Lynda**

Kate Andrews: A precious grain in the salt of the earth.

Jean, My mother: Who throughout her suffering protected us with her buffering.

Auntie Doris: My first Sunday school teacher. She taught me not about religion but caring.

**Michelle**

Phyl Clark my mum who promised to buy me a book when aged thirteen I could finally present ten, unbitten fingernails. That book? Fire and Hemlock by Diana Wynne Jones

Elsie May Xiao Creek engineered the elements by day, played piano music by night. One Sunday did invite me to a West Hull pub for a pint, to meet odd folk calling themselves poets.

Cilla Wykes friend and ally challenged the status quo unleashing a ribbon of new writers upon the world, Tears triumphs and tantrums: a new wave of spoken word.

**(Last go) Kate:**

Cartimandua who shagged the stable boy and kept the North safe from the Romans for over twenty-five years.

**Kate on Cartimandua:**

You’ve heard of Boadicea because she fought the Romans and got loads of her Celtic tribespeople people killed. By contrast, Cartimandua, was Queen of the Brigantes and ruled from about 43 to 70 AD. The mandua part of her name means little pony. With my hair, I can identify. She probably inherited the throne from her Grandfather and held ultimate power over the Brigantes tribe and ruled a territory from Galloway to Yorkshire. She chose a consort, Venutius, but got fed up of him in 69AD and went off with his armour bearer Vellocatus whose name means “Better in battle”. Most of the information we have about her came from Tacitus who was not a fan of strong women and mansplained, I mean shared historical fact when he said: “Favouring the illegitimate husband were the Queen’s libido and her ferocious temper”. Cartimandua was the living representative of the matriarchal Goddess Brigantia or Bridget. She must also have been a cunning political strategist to build alliances with the Romans who instead of killing loads of the population, operated it as a kind of client kingdom a bit like Westminster does with the North nowadays, taking taxes and providing services, except the Romans would probably have instituted better trains. However after she dumped him her ex was quite bitter and started a civil war trying to become King of the North. The Romans spirited Cartimandua away and she vanished from history- and took over the Brigantes region.

1. **Vicky’s Bridget poem**

*Everyone else steps back and sits down  
Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page*

I found Bridget in a garden yesterday.

A white-haired woman had pressed

Sharp-edged blade to tree trunk -

Carved her from a wooden womb -

And released her into the world.

She’d been destined for the prow

Of a rich man’s ship but wind and weather

Redirected her to stand here;

Bark-hemmed dress meeting grass and pavers,

Among the walking women

Milling about her.

Her hands are outstretched,

At her feet a fire pit.

I talk with her creator, of how

She uncovered her face from

A shroud of oak, swaddled her in

Painted folds of fabric.

Beside me, my mum talks plants

And I smile into the empty space

Where my Nanna stands, glad that my mum

Has found this temporary other

To share appreciation of well-placed

Roots nurtured to abundance.

Knowledge binds us, something spinning

In the air above us, like golden twine;

A cat’s cradle between this and

All the other gardens we visited today

Where other women

Have caressed stems into flowers

Have smoothed clay into vases

Have fire gazed and splayed bristle against canvas.

I wonder if it stretches to my own garden

A seedling

With a single line of poetry

Hovering at its edge.

1. **Lynda’s Hull poem (ending with the Committee)**

ROUTE

(1)

There *was* no plan for her.

Rationing, grey fashioning after a war.

A father, burdened with traumas from all that *he* saw.

A Mother’s thwarted efforts to abort

Water in a bath made of tin, too hot for her skin,

head in a spin, from a slug of cheap gin.

No more, than to consent to endure a spartan gestation.

And to accept that there will be no welcoming cordiality.

Just polite words of banality.

This was Hull where dreamers of dreams and seers of visions

wasted years [too long a span], dabbling with The Abercrombie Plan.

A prodigious task to restore, our beloved city blitzed by the war.

Festival House, the first to rise from the ashes of destruction,

a resisting framework - a lasting construction.

But not for her - no stanchions of resilience erected.

Unconditioned, her smile evoked smiles each time she woke.

A child of temperament, bereft of influence.

Innocence, a weak opponent for what he affected.

1960 awakens the hearts of Hammonds and Thornton Varley.

Thugs and hard-uns marched to Queen’s Gardens.

Cecil Cinema, the stirring strings of Mantovani.

Three Glass Ships Mosaic, reflecting the sun,

contradicting dark days of trawlers gone down.

Fly-over, Dairycoates and Anlaby road, a sham.

No more feigned surprise, as steam chuffs up guileless thighs.

People rehoused from Harrow Street to Longhill.

“They don’t talk the same” said Tom Courtenay’s Mam

Too long - deprived of the nature of meaningless thoughts.

Groomed for trepidation, dread and consternation.

By importing his hefty fears, he wreaked havoc with her formative years.

Constraining and oppressing - destroying innovation.

The torments he had nightmares about, never spoken?

By the time she was sixteen - she was broken.

There was nothing visible from any particular point.

No horizons…

Until…

A repeated rhythmic rumble hardly heard, yet fully perceived.

It was a mantra of life, a deep reverberating sense,

conveying a feeling of ‘change’:

Enter The Warrior Queen - disguised,

inaugurating her genius, she was avenious.

Rollers, turban - no teeth could be seen

Large unsupported breasts heaved beneath turquoise crimplene.

“I will slay your father’s will, by telling tales of blazing trails”.

“Fire – I’ll take you to burn. Fire – I’ll take you to learn”.

Charioted into the night, to wage a war, to change tack.

Summoned to do what lads did, scared to embrace the craic.

She settled herself among remnant flower stalks precision-cut.

The searing powerfulness of their scent wafting shutters open,

no more shut.

A feeling so close to fear. ‘Excitement?’

A feeling almost deserving of indictment.

‘Leader of the Pack’

‘My Boyfriends Back’

An all-female outfit “They must be lesbians”

What’s a lesbian? Somebody from Lesbia?

Give her a shove - It’s illegal to love.

‘Everybody’s doing a brand new dance now’.

Diesel locomotion’s in Paragon Station.

Telephone House defies expectations.

Long distance Information, give me Memphis Tennessee, The Beatles ABC

Live at Hull ‘The Who’ cause a sensation

This *was* ‘My Generation’.

(2)

Time, even with fallen arches, still marches

Old Woman now – no-more a lass

The fire that burned and sent sparks flying,

tempers to embers - but not yet to dying

‘The beat goes on’ - five decades pass.

A reflection, not her, stares back from the glass.

Debossed is the life we wear on our skin.

Immortality, we cannot win.

‘Let the heartaches begin’.

We warrior women, combatant and brave.

Sad is the hopeless awareness of life we can’t save.

A callous reminder - not long for the grave.

Life without *him* is a chore

And ‘The Sun aint Gonna Shine Anymore’

Did we really think eternity existed?

Reality – when it cuffed us - could not be resisted.

Less to expect, nothing so great, everything smaller.

No more horizons or praise from our extoller. Until…

*(RAP)*

…They came like the rain

to pause their fading,

moisten their jading,

a welcome pervading.

Alice and Rachel and Annie, ‘The She’s’

Canny ‘The She’s’

Frangipanni ‘The She’s’

They say;

‘We have surveyed you,

let us parade you,

second crusade you.

the hook’s in the book,

‘It’s Different for Girls’

Vociferous for girls.

A musical - *you* inspired.

You tipped the scales

by rupturing veils,

blowing wind in the sails

that helped women to grow’…

“Have we *really* come that far?”

‘Well – not *really* - No!’

Ours are supposed freedoms and not what *we* chose,

an illusion - which *your* generation set out to oppose.

But this is Hull two thousand and seventeen

and it will *not* forget that *you* have been.

You were made in Hull, stayed in Hull, played in Hull,

You are part of the mystery of Hull, the sisterly of Hull.

And when finally you stand before the committee

you can shout ‘here I am!’

‘I’m the one conceived without a plan

I did not fail! I blazed a trail!’

1. **Michelle’s Transition / Citizenship test poem**

*Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page*

Cross water to survive cross water to stay alive,

cross water to escape, cross water to stay safe.

Whether the waters of the Humber or those of the Hull, the

The promise of a better future the irresistible pull of the new.

Cross water from East to West, cross water in an orange life vest

Three times from I crossed from East to West my life piled high

in a Tesco trolley … cross water, cross water. Cross water.

A productive member of society, not a drain on the state,

can you live in your chosen role your chosen place,

does the face fit and do you feel welcome?

The U.K. Entry quiz demands us to know Wilberforce,

yet we are pushed from pillar to post….

They speak at me in the street, staring, laughing

making some dirty remark, don’t stop to ask me how I am doing today.

In public spaces you talk across me, assuming I won’t understand.

So I don’t know your language as you do, does it mean I am foolish?

I can speak many languages, how many do you have?

It is like an invisible wall, I crossed water to survive

crossed water to stay alive, crossed water to follow my dream

but try as I might I don’t look right in your eyes. You don’t see me

won’t see me as equal. My story is written before I open my mouth.

And so we wait in a place we can’t call home, we wait in exile,

for the ink to dry, the papers to be signed, the keys to freedom.

All the while keeping your eyes and ears open and a suitcase packed

for the knock at the door for the day you have to give it all back.

1. **Julie’s Mothering Manual poem**

# Reading from parenting manuals of difference

Sometimes dragon, always phoenix

Phoebe’s phone rings and in that moment

Phoebe’s heart answers all his calls

It has been like this for years

I’m proud of his tenacity, his zest, he always tries his best

We all know the questions

Take them in our stride

Does he take sugar?

Can she dance?

Julie’s daughter loves football

Goes to every home match with her Dad

Hears the crowd chant

‘City ‘til we die’

Who will take her after that?

Julie says ‘Worrying doesn't stop any grass growing’

Joanne smiles while she dusts

Knows social workers so well

Fresh coffee, fresh cake

And their ways learnt as training tips - they may not sit down until asked

Joanne tells them ever visit

‘Park yourself in the front room

You need to get these incontinence pad deliveries sorted

after all it has only been fifteen years and counting’

It is all chance special needs

Hand In Cap

That is what it means

By chance, luck of the draw

First day of school

Annie took Joel

They sat outside the office

Day after day

Four and a half weeks

Until inclusion was easier for the staff than explaining Annie and Joel away

‘How do you feel about that victory Annie?’

‘Marvellous

Bloody Marvellous

Bring it on, bring it on again’

Sue’s son runs round the park

Like the superhero he is

Sue wears logo rich t shirts; marathons, grocery shopping, car boot sales, parachute jumping

‘Because it helps’

Sometimes dragon, always phoenix

We all know the questions

Take them in our stride

Does he take sugar?

Can she dance?

Jill was told at diagnosis

‘Music -loving and prone to colds’

Now her boy is a teenager, with all the charm of Kevin and Perry plus

Wheelchair, failing heart and hearing aids

You all know the questions

Take them in your stride

Does he take sugar?

Can she dance?

Beth had a good job that she loved

But love nor money could arrange dependable care

Had to make working from home suit her

It can be complicated, lonely

Sometimes dragon, always phoenix

The parenting manual of difference has a chapter ‘Celebrate Everything’ as all parenting manuals do

Rita organises birthday parties for her boys

Double trouble

No balloons, badges or candles

Just family, family friends, model steam trains, red jelly and plain sponge cake

Kath has a cabinet of trophies

Goes to see her girl

Three maybe four times a week

Sam says

‘My Mam is my bestest friend ever’

You know all the questions

Answer them in your stride

Mags collects ornamental dragons

Has her own scales, fire breaths and claws

Mags suggests

‘If you have a choice, pick your fights, fight only when you are feisty and strong’

Her youngest boy

Kisses the front door after every trip outside

Mags has her flames

is a firebird

flares and sparkles

again and again and again

Sometimes dragon, always phoenix

**7. Louise’s Mothering Poem**

**My mother once said**

My mother once said, ‘OooOoooh, I don’t like women.’

The way you say you don’t like veiny cheese.

Or Justin Bieber. Or spiders. Or hidden fees.

Like camping, snoring, ironing or queuing.

Like sales peoples, marmite, liver, housework-doing.

That’s half the human race

dismissed with a scrunched-up face

and a very final, ‘OooOoooh, I don’t like women.’

My mother once said,’ Wash his socks for him.’

The him was my first boyfriend, staying over, still in bed.

He’d only brought one pair.

He ended up barefoot instead.

I thought, he’s got hands to wank with,

use them to rinse out your own footwear.

But I never said it then.

I didn’t dare.

My mother once asked why Morrissey

had a tree

hanging out of his arse

on Top of the Pops in 1983.

She didn’t want an answer.

She was being facetious.

A word she taught me well,

like all good English teachers.

My mother once said, ‘I love you.’

I turned, heart hopeful, smile ready, eyes agog.

She was talking to the dog.

My mother once said, ‘OooOoooh, I don’t like women.’

But I say…

I love women. I love dogs. I do not like Morrissey. I love socks.

I used to love wanking but I’m peri-menopausal

and haven’t got the time or the dexterity.

I even love my mother.

1. **Cass’s Phillip Larkin poem**

**Phillip Larkin Told My English Teacher to Fuck Off Outside The Brynmor Jones Library At Hull University**

You told me this story when I was seventeen

And falling reluctantly in love with The Whitsun Weddings, in that

Stockholm-syndrome way you do with the poems they give to you to badly dissect so someone can give you an A-level

“He told me to fuck off once,” you said

“I was on the grass outside the library and I shouldn’t have been”

And you laughed, and shook your head, and left me

It echoed in my head,

A drumbeat tattoo that popped up from time to time

When his *piled gold clouds* parted to reveal

The precise misogynist nastiness of

*Bri-nylon baby dolls*

You didn’t know all this,

Or maybe you did, I don’t know

Maybe it was your plan all along to teach me

That it’s okay to judge the words of dead white famous men

Even when you’re not yet twenty and have published nothing and haven’t yet learned your own craft

Because sometimes, their words show more than they intended

Now, your words remind me

That yes, Larkin wrote about the landscapes I love with a clarity so sharp and bright I thought my heart might break

But he told you, my English teacher, to fuck off outside the library

And yes, he put Spurn Point on the page in a way I’ll love until I die

But he told you to fuck off

But the *arrow shower*

But he told you to fuck off

But the *Arundel Tomb*

But

Fuck off

He thought he had the power then,

But really it was you

You took that moment and forged it into a bright spear to break the carapace

Of two thousand years of men with pens

And thanks to you, when anyone tells me to get off the fucking grass outside the library,

I laugh, and give them two fingers in return and say,

*Fine,*

*I’ll write my own damn library*.

1. **Kate’s Work poem**

*Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page*

**Spinning a Yarn**

Imagine

you’re holding a thread

which is held by your mother,

then her mother,

then her mother,

double, treble, quadruple twisted ties,

back, back in a long line that stretches further than you can see.

Maybe you’re all in a field.

Somehow it’s not chaos,

somehow your nan’s not distracted by the Yorkshire terrier

and your mum’s not said anything mean about your hair

though mostly every alternate woman in my chain

would get on better with each other

than with the one right next to her.

Anyway, you’re holding the end,

the thread’s vibrating but it’s just this frozen moment,

as if you’re waiting for someone,

to snap the lens shutter so you can go back to people who suit you,

your husband, your friends,

this is sort of an obligation, sort of a privilege,

this moment,

making the chain, of women you’ll still mostly never name,

as they stretch into the horizon’s edge

and you’re all worried it will rain,

but you’re hearing fragments of chatter,

trekking from the city centre during the blitz

for just one good night’s sleep,

how that Auntie started a driving school,

the realisation that your brows all wrinkle in the same place

when you laugh because you’re nervous.

These women who are not on an official record,

who didn’t chuck themselves under a horse,

but who managed to steer their own course

through the things they were told they couldn’t do,

shouldn’t do. They made it work.

They weren’t allowed strategies,

they couldn’t shuffle soldiers

across maps, piece up and rearrange continents,

but they all had tactics,

making the best of what they had,

the day-to-day resistances and choices,

and even though we can’t see their faces

or hear their voices,

you hold that thread that they’ve all spun,

and still the looms are clacking on,

the threads are criss-crossing with other chains,

from women written out of history,

with ones who shouted loudly.

The more twists a thread is given,

the stronger it becomes.

Black threads, white threads,

ones that got lost and trampled in the dirt

for years,

but at this moment it’s making a double helix

down your maternal line,

then springs back,

echoes of thunderous looms,

the shuttle’s clack,

you’re holding it, just this one thread

in the great weave of history.

Will you keep to the old pattern

or start a new one?

Lose the weft, keep the warp?

Find new materials,

a different yarn to spin?

Can you drop that thread altogether,

take up ones from another kin?

These choices

which are not completely yours

and not completely not.

Take this moment

while you can

to throw a nod of recognition

to the thread holders down the line,

then it’s yours. Begin.

1. **Tea-break with “Things I have done to earn a crust”**

*All on stage, in a row, with clipboards. Kate introduces the Tea Break. Asks the audience (and us) to “Dab” if we’ve also done the job or had a similar experience.  
Each share four jobs, one at a time, in turn (so four times round)  
Can read jobs from clipboards**Last “job” is how we became writers*

*Order:*

**Vicky**

At Craven Park I served chips and sausage to rugby players, coffee and biscuits to execs and posh meals to sponsors – even though I spent my childhood cheering my dad from the steps of the Boulevard.

I sat at my desk at the edge of the Humber and learned about Bills of Lading, Transit Times and Import Duty. I chose to ignore the boss who said I should be at home looking after my kids.

I called up the voice I’d kept in my bathroom and sang on stages across Yorkshire – whether anyone was listening or not.

People offered me money to stand on stage and share words I thought would never leave my journal pages. I forgot that I wasn’t thin enough or groomed enough, that I’d dropped out of college and I had a Hull accent. I snapped their bloody hands off.

**Julie**

Shelf-stacking Saturday girl at Boots the Chemist  
Extra-firm hairspray, lemon bath salts, rose-scented deodorant,  
 Haikarate Cologne and those things for the ever hopeful

Creche worker, six weeks summer holidays, filled a sand pit, emptied a sand pit, sang nursery rhymes, sang the wheels on the bus, the wheels on the bus, the wheels on the bus, the wheels on the bus

Held a boy fast  
His knees to his chest  
For a ‘lets hope it is not anything serious’ lumbar puncture, spinal tap

Went to London on the 5.20 morning train

Again, and again and again

Presentations, words, conferences

Blah, blah, blah

Reports, case reviews, words

Blah, blah, blah

Lessons learnt

Blah, blah, blah

Wrote a poem one night on the late train home

Back to Paragon Station

Thought I would be more useful as a poet

**Louise**

I’ve been a chambermaid at a cheap UK chain hotel. Seen plenty of cock, plenty of stains, and earned about £2.75 a year in tips.

When I was fourteen I entertained the old folks in a care home. This involved eating most of their biscuits. Loved eighty-year-old Ethel who looked like a lady, but swore like a docker and once ran a pub on ‘Road.

I invigilated exams for a while. Felt sorry for the kids who were struggling and gave them most of the answers.

After ten years, four novels and about six million rejections, I finally got a book deal in 2015. I am a writer! A real and proper and dead good writer!

**Cass**

I once pulled pints in a pub so close to bankruptcy the landlord watered down the lime for the lager and lime

I went through the phone book asking people to collect for the British Sailor’s Society. Key skill: getting out the words “I’M NOT SELLING WINDOWS IT’S FOR A CHARITY” before they hung up on me

While six months pregnant, I had to draw a picture of a cartoon fanny on a flip-chart for a meeting full of middle-aged schoolboys (combined net worth: about six hundred million quid) to explain the politics of pubic hair. Felt my daughter stir inside me. Had the thought: “This cannot be my job.”

After fifteen years of nagging from literally everyone who knew me, submitted secret writing project to a competition for unpublished work. While unpacking yoghurts in the kitchen, found out via a friend’s Facebook comment that I had won and my book would be published. Realised what I was really meant to do with my life. Burst into tears and called my mother

**Lynda**

Landlady: Breakfast at seven evening meal at six

I don’t allow kids. They ger on me wick.

I used to **Clean** elitists boats in Benalmadena Marina. During my break times I would abandon my white overalls, pour myself a gin and tonic, courtesy of the owner who’d invited me to help myself to a cold drink? Don dark glasses and sprawl out on an expensive lounger on the deck; then I would relax and listen to the envious comments of poorer less privileged than I, passers-by…

I worked in a **Betting-shop,** taking bets from men whose wives were unaware of their husband’s diligent efforts to become a millionaire.

Off to **University** to do a degree in psychology. My tutor tells me that my thesis reads like a Catherine Cookson Novel, meandering rather than stating scientific facts. I took that as a compliment and began to write…

**Michelle**

I’ve given myself frozen fingers handling frozen fish night shifts on Gillet Street. Sweary men and women in bright white wellies tossing haddock and cod from box to bag, then outside for a fag in the winter, where it’s even colder than the freezer.

I’ve stripped, a 16 wheeler of phone-books in less than half-an-hour, and stacked and packed them from Hull to Holmfirth.

I have for 60 minutes twice a week, met up with a Portuguese man and made him speak, only English.

I’ve typed reams and peopled blank screens with writers n dancers, pipers n painters filmmakers and once interviewed a percussionist dressed as a pineapple. Poets with thatch thinning, sat in bars gently fomenting, tell me all about their latest collection: working class dreamers and backstage staff and white middle-aged blokes taking photographs.

**Kate**

I have been:

A spare paper girl,

just like I was a reserve on the netball team,

and the Young Krypton Factor.

Ever since I have longed to be, and dreaded being,

chosen or necessary.

I’ve been the world’s most sceptical

Tarot line operator

who had to say to a caller worried about money

“Perhaps you should stop calling

this £1.50 an hour psychic line

four times a day”

and deal with heavy breathers

who accidentally got patched through

from the sex lines next door.

I have been a radio newsreader,

the one Dennis the American consultant,

said would confuse the listeners

with her female voice

(as they already had one of those on at breakfast).

The one Shaun the Programme Controller

said was too Northern for the Northern station.

I have been a poet,

who started making a living

when Blair said the arts were about

talent and meritocratic choices,

and realised that actually

I wanted to hear my own

and others’ unheard voices.

**11. Cass’s Procedures poem**

**Procedures To Keep Your Menfolk Safe At Sea**

Our nannas knew how to placate the sea

They felt no shame in superstition

Casting spells was a public duty

When we laughed at them, they laughed back,

And then told us what to do anyway:

Don’t go down the docks to wave him off

Don’t go down the docks to meet him back

And for God’s sake, don’t ever go on board

In fact, basically, it’s probably best

To stay away from the docks altogether

And act like you’ve never heard of the bloody sea at all

When he leaves the house, don’t say goodbye, but

“Ta-ra”, or “see you soon”, or “off you go then”

Don’t watch him as he goes, but instead

Get tea started or put the kettle on or scold the dog

But let your washing lie in the basket, or by the machine, or even on the floor where he left it

Because you might wash your man away too

(And besides, washing clothes and saying goodbye are both shitty jobs,

And nobody should have to do both in a twenty-four hour period)

Always bash in the bottoms of your empty egg-shells

And yes, we know all this won’t keep him safe

But we do it anyway

Because the day we don’t do it

Is the day we’ll wish we had

Our mothers were educated to know better

The sea they knew kept its bounty under the floorboards

Pierced by iron platforms, and reached by chopped air

They cast their spells in private, each thinking they were the only ones:

When the taxi comes, don’t let yourself cry

Don’t watch the news

And don’t check the weather forecast

Instead, put on the programme he can’t stand

Or the album he hates

Or rent *Dirty Dancing* from the video shop*,* again

Pour three sticky fingers from the secret Baileys bottle

Eat cake for dinner when the kids have gone to bed

Pour three sticky fingers from the baileys bottle

Call your best mate and tell her in great and outraged detail everything he’s done to annoy you recently

Beneath your pillow, stash the t-shirt you peeled off him the last time you had sex

And don’t wash it until he’s home

And yes, they knew this wouldn’t keep him safe

But they did it anyway

Because the day they didn’t do it

Would be the day they wished they had

Here’s what happened to me, one night in 1988:

My father stood in the kitchen, about to leave for the North Sea

And someone not quite me put words inside my head -

*Dad, you shouldn’t go on this trip*

Our nannas, who knew best, would have spoken up

Our mothers, who knew better, would have dismissed it

I was fifteen years old and I thought I knew everything,

But I had no idea what to do

So I took a lightstick my dad had brought me back

Snapped the capsule, watched the luminescence flare,

Thought of underwater, and told myself,

*As long as this lightstick stands beside my bed*

*My dad will be safe*

I can tell you what came next in just two words:

*Piper Alpha*

Some of us saw it on the news

Or heard it from friends or neighbours

I woke to the sound of the phone ringing

And my dad’s lightstick on the floor

I was lucky

The sea was on fire, and my dad was in it

But as a rescuer

Helping men from the water

Hunting unburnt veins to fill with saline and morphine

Dressing the places where their skin used to be

Telling them they’d live

Not flinching

My family was lucky

Because my dad came home

And yes, I know I didn’t keep him safe

What happened would have happened just the same,

And there’s no such thing as second sight

But here’s my advice to you:

When Bridget sends you a warning, forget everything you think you know

And cast that spell with all you have in you

Because the day you don’t do it

Might be the day you wish you had.

1. **Julie’s Bridget poem**

# I would like to tell you about three women who might be named Bridget

If Bridget was this friend, she would be called Gina.

Gina gave me three pieces of advice

Julie aluminium foil is your friend, used wisely you will never need to clean an oven again

Julie if you have a daughter who says, weekends and evenings are for black nail varnish, black lipstick and rag a tag clothes say yes if you always rock the wearing of them

And finally, if it sounds and looks like a bull in a china shop then it is a bull in a china shop.

If Bridget was this friend, she would be called Reka

Who I did not know very well and know more about her now she has died.

Reka has taught me a new value in remembering,

To share the thought that Reka would have loved so much so much of the City of Culture as she loved so much of life.

Does not lessen the pain of anyone’s grief and grief itself is still a lonesome place

But it does give her smile, her laugh back to this world

If Bridget was this friend, she would be called Rosie

Who will say of her home it can be bleak, but look what colours the sun brings at sunrise and sunset

Who shares her home with people who need a place to rest

Whose chickens lay blue eggs and wake up the mornings with stridencies of possibilities no one can sleep through

I have yet to meet a women that could not be called Bridget some time or other.

Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page

1. **Vicky’s Boxing poem**

*Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page  
We may all be on stage for this one to act as the “chorus” for the refrain*

**Boxing Poem**

I fluttered clumsily on edges

Butterfly; transparent wings,

Heels struggling for purchase,

Puffed punches lacking sting.

She’s only a lass. She won’t

Stick at nowt. She’s too old,

She’s getting fat. My edges

Frayed and fading.

Somehow blown off track.

But I’d always dreamed of legs in silk,

Of fingers leather-clad.

Of lights and bells and squats

And runs, clenched knuckles

Finding bags.

*We’ll warm you up,*

*We’ll find your beat,*

*We’ll oil your fingers,*

*Grease your feet,*

*First you’ll stand firm*

*And then you’ll fly.*

*5,4,3,2,1*

I’m probably too old now

I don’t know what I’m thinking

Just be content with 9 til 5

And Saturday nights out drinking.

I should be calming down now

Not taking up new stuff

I should be chuffed by sparkles

Fabrics, make-up, bits of fluff.

But there’s a roaring in my ears

First a whisper, growing louder

There’s a woman up on canvas

With her mates all crowded round her,

And I wonder what it feels like

At the centre of the fray

It’s the wondering that’s dragged me in

And made me want to stay.

*We’ll warm you up,*

*We’ll find your beat,*

*We’ll oil your fingers,*

*Grease your feet,*

*First you’ll stand firm*

*And then you’ll fly.*

*5,4,3,2,1*

There’s a rhythm in this room

A pounding in the air

There’s lycra, trainers

breast restrainers, joggers,

leggings, we don’t care.

There’s no assessing gaze to watch us

Weighing, wondering, prying

There’s work and speed and “just one more”

And a heat that you could die in.

There’s nearly bringing up your dinner,

There’s burning legs and faces

There’s sisterhood, there’s dreaming,

And well, dreams can take you places.

*We’ll warm you up,*

*We’ll find your beat,*

*We’ll oil your fingers,*

*Grease your feet,*

*First you’ll stand firm*

*And then you’ll fly.*

*5,4,3,2,1*

My body is a bag of sand

That cannot leave the bed

There’s pounding in my arms and legs

And squat-thrusts in my head

There’s kids to feed,

There’s work to do, I’ve knackered myself up.

I’d take some tea and sympathy

If I could lift the cup.

Dig deep, keep breathing

Get them hands up,

Power through.

You’re only halfway there yet.

Get up. There’s work to do.

*We’ll warm you up,*

*We’ll find your beat,*

*We’ll oil your fingers,*

*Grease your feet,*

*First you’ll stand firm*

*And then you’ll fly.*

*5,4,3,2,1*

My sister holds my bag for me

My sister takes my punches

My sister rings me when I’m down

And makes the kids packed lunches.

My sister finds that strength in me

When I don’t know it’s there.

I’m sweating, farting, burping, laughing,

But I’m nearly there.

My sister counts me down, she holds my toes

She takes my hand, she keeps my fists on target

When I can’t make them land. She parries,

Thrusts and jabs with me,

We keep each other going. She’s broken

There beside me. She’s surviving and

She’s knowing.

*We’ll warm you up,*

*We’ll find your beat,*

*We’ll oil your fingers,*

*Grease your feet,*

*First you’ll stand firm*

*And then you’ll fly.*

*5,4,3,2,1*

But now I stand alone

And the roaring’s all around me

My fists are where they’ve ached to be

The circling spots have found me.

And there’s the calm before the storm

There’s a breath and then the bell

And I’m waiting for her punch to land

Cos that leather glove will tell.

Once they’ve thrown the first punch

I’ll know what they’ve got

I’ll know if I can take it,

And by now, I’ll take a lot.

And my arms are working on their own

My feet have found their dance

I’m circling, I’m parrying,

And now I’ve got my chance.

And my hands are in the air

And the sisterhood is cheering

And I’m sobbing, and I’ve done it

And what I’ve waited for,

I’m hearing. And I know that it

Was worth it, and I did it on my own

My sisters have all brought me here

I’ve worked hard

And I’ve flown.

And I’ll never be the same again

I’ll never go back there

My face is flushed with crimson and

There’s rainbows in my hair

And there’s gold and bronze and silver

In my veins and in my chest

And I’ll know I did this every day

Until the day I rest.

1. **Michelle, Bridget poem**

*Can introduce first, or just go straight into the poem  
Fine to either learn by heart or read from the page*

Bridget was once my neighbour

her healing touch and soothing words

calmed racing minds and frightened eyes.

She ushered me in: into her world

of charms, cobwebs and candle lights

Apple pie and arnica the essential ingredients

of her invocations. She would stir the coppers on the stove

as petals bled purple and red. Sweet tinctures and simple balms

bottled and pressed into rough palms to lift the spirit and perfume

the skin. The family kitchen shifting as we follow the Goddess

to the age of the Brig antes. The potion’s intoxicating

the imagination set free, opening doorways to dreams….

giving way to frivolous thought, brought back to earth.

I’ve never been at one with New Age wooly

thinking, but that Appl-ey pie... sure tasted good.

**15. Louise**

FEMALE WARRIOR

I’m at war with myself, and I will win.

I’ll put on my warpaint and go into battle;

a streak of red, my lips to speak;

a whisper of pink to protect my cheeks;

autumn gold shields fading hair;

blackest mascara emboldens my stare;

earrings of emerald deflect attack;

red, pink, gold, green and black.

This is my armour, worn with pride;

combat colours displayed for fight.

But the battleground inside

can’t be painted, can’t be seen.

So I’ll trailblaze my words,

dazzle you with my colours.

Until I heal.

I’m at war with myself, and I will win.

I’ll put on my warpaint and go into battle.

1. **Lynda, Bridget poem**

Bridgid the warrior maiden.

Woman of the celts.

Matriarchal, highly honoured

Smithcraft; fire that smelts.

Spread throughout Europe,

disparate where her tribe.

Gather them together.

Unity her vibe.

Imbolc – Her celebration.

A Dolly made from corn,

represents our Mistress of the Mantel,

white dresses shall be worn

by maidens. Ritualistic mating,

insuring new souls dwell.

Her symbols of healing,

her bag and her bell.

I smell corn bread

made by my Mother.

Deft hands belie harsh winters in the yard.

Blood on her knuckles from

toil too hard.

Happiness marred.

The dolly tub, the scrubber.

A warrior too, my Mother.

1. **“If I were Queen of the North”**

*Come onto stage one by one (Lynda is already on but will speak second, in response to Michelle’s piece) and share our piece:*

**Michelle**

If I were Queen of the North I’d use my magic of course

With a click of a finger the glasses refill

the table tops with food overflow,

but woe betide the evil eye to ding you down

if any one of you should step out of line.

**Lynda**

If I were Queen o’ North

I’d have a great time doin’ just what *I* like

Not what *you* like -what *I* like.

And if *you* didn’t like it,

I’d say ‘tough titty’ just cos *I* could-

and things like ‘on yer bike’ and ‘up yours’.

Nah - Not that I really would.

(*Posh) No – If I were Queen of the North*

*I’d threaten to chop off your head!*

*I’d relish your living in dread!*

Taw - But really I like you and wouldn’t want you dead!

*(Posh)* *So instead – I would demand your reverence*

*And you would give it…*

*Or I would order your severance!*

**Louise**

If I were Queen o’ North,

I’d say everything like it is.

I’d be polite with teeth,

pick at the truth underneath.

I’d bite while I kiss,

both take and give the piss.

I’d say, I love you to bits

but you drive me batty;

you’ve got eyes that promise sex,

but your ballet pumps are tatty.

I’d say your hair’s a bit shit

but your smile’s totally lit.

Say your cardy’s on inside out

but that skirt has real clout.

Because sharp teeth

dig deep.

Sharp teeth cut;

sharp teeth gut.

But an open wound bleeds out.

It drips iron, pain, everything, nowt.

If I were Queen o’ North,

I’d speak as I find

and find as I speak.

I’d rip you apart

while giving you every single bit of my

heart.

**Cass**

If I was Queen of the North,

I’d be all about the glittery stuff

Crown Jewels would be worn daily, but

Not just by me

We’d all have life-long lottery tickets,

And each week, one lucky winner

Would be the glitziest, ritziest, diamond-est Queen in town

School reform! For an hour each day, teachers would teach

Whatever the hell they felt their students needed to know right then

And for our new act of collective worship

We’d congregate for story-time

If this is making you wince, don’t worry

I’d also go everywhere on horseback

So I’d have plenty of thinking time for any really big decisions

**Kate**

If I were Queen of the North, I would run a devolved parliament from Leeds (because it’s central)

People would zoom on the newly electrified, fast train lines to visit me and say “Kate…why is your socialist, feminist utopia so efficient, so happiness-enhancing, just so great?

**Julie**

Now Kate

When I am Queen of the North

I shall be known as the ‘Practical Queen’

Hull will have an upgraded road and rail links

So, we will have the seat of power here

With our new iconic bridge over Castle Street

After all we are the Pioneering City and Gateway to Europe

On a practical note I will bring back cricket ‘cos I like it

Give everybody a guaranteed minimum wage

Build bridle and bike paths all over the auction

And make all public buildings, parks and land free for community use

That’s that

**Vicky**

If I was Queen of the North all meals would be consummated by Yorkshire Puddings dripping in Golden Syrup. Everyone would stride out in sturdy boots at least once a week to remember the rugged beauty of where we live, to remember how it feels to have an empty head and sturdy legs. And when our bellies were full, and our bodies and minds were primed and ready, we’d raise our voices from classrooms, conferences, stages and houses – so loud that they’d echo across the country in a symphony of Northern accents. So warm that people would let them into their hearts.

1. **Kate’s final Cartimandua “chat” and intro for applause**

*All step back and wait for Kate to call us forward*

1. **Closing extracts**

*All speak our extracts and go into Power Pose:*

**Michelle**

Take the armourer’s spike and prick the arse bleed it dry of all that gas

it is not the proclamations you utter, but the seeds you sow that matter

**Kate**

Sometimes knowing just how much they don’t care any more

makes her tummy go round like nipple tassels.

**Julie**

sometimes dragon, always phoenix

Mags has her flames

is a firebird

flares and sparkles

again and again and again

**Louise**

I love women. I love dogs. I DO NOT love Morrissey. I love socks.

I used to love wanking but I’m peri-menopausal

and haven’t got the time or the dexterity.

**Vicky**

My sister counts me down, she holds my toes, she takes my hand

She keeps my fists on target when I can’t make them land

She parries, thrusts and jabs with me – we keep each other going

She’s broken there beside me, she’s surviving and she’s knowing.

**Cass**

And thanks to you, when anyone tells me to get off the fucking grass outside the library,

I laugh, and give them two fingers in return and say,

*Fine,*

*I’ll write my own damn library*.

**Lynda**

A repeated rhythmic rumble hardly heard, yet fully perceived. It was a mantra of life, a deep reverberating sense, conveying a feeling of ‘change’.

*Three drum-beats, then “Queens of the North”*