



I Stand Alone, by Rebecca Farnfield from South Farnham School
First Place Winner of 2016/17 Poetry Competition, ages 9-11

I am the Hornbeam tree, I stand alone
Rooted here on this bloodied throne.
I rule over the dead and I'm testament to their pain,
This wretched war where there's nothing to gain.
I have seen flesh cut like butter, and heard grown men scream,
These harrowing sights haunt my every dream.
I watched them fall, one by one,
The choking gas at the back of their tongue.
I tried to protect them, offering my trunk for strength
But the ceaseless rain of gunfire, meant they couldn't leave the trench.
As my rust coloured leaves fall like tears,
I become a sole survivor of these war torn years.
My roots are embedded with the souls of the dead.
My branches reaching up so their prayers can be said
I'm alone on this meadow, once scarce and rotten,
But my comrades below will never be forgotten.



Rebecca reading her poem at Buckingham Palace for the NSI Centenary Finale

"My inspiration came from reading 'A Monster Calls' by Patrick Ness, the tree in this story has an important message to get across. Giving the tree a voice allowed me to write my poem from a first-hand perspective. This made it more personal and the imagery more powerful and poignant as the tree was actually there living through the pain of war."

- Rebecca Farnfield

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