

***the starting line***

*by Deshna (Y11)*

*Never again, we said,*  
When we were but a moment too late—  
To see that a complicated  
situation  
Was the same beginning,  
Dressed in different years  
*Never again, we said—*  
Flowers hoisted up to the heavens,  
Red as the bootprints  
That now crumble in our wake  
Like gravestones (contrite)  
That never wanted a tomb  
Brimful of youth it never asked to hold  
*Never again, we said,*  
As ink bled dry, like a date—  
Honey-sweet and deceptive  
On yellowing papers,  
Signed with steady hands  
That never felt the ash,  
Never smelt iron in burning air—  
We said it once more.  
As names shrivelled  
To tens,  
Twenties, thousands  
Of weary-eyed children  
Learning to play hide-and-seek  
Amongst cratered terrain  
Which was—  
(as no child's insides should ever be)—  
Churned into hollow canyons of bone and dust,

Never again to reach the heights  
They once hoped to grow  
*Never again, we said,*  
As those children learn again to spell their names  
In dust, in rubble, in  
The margins of evacuation orders,  
Practising futures  
They would never be sanctioned to begin  
*Never again, we said*  
But history circled back  
on itself—  
Bootprints settling neatly  
Into older bootprints,  
As if the earth itself  
Remembered the way  
down  
*Never again—*  
But the pistol's cries resounded  
For miles.  
But we remain still  
By the starting line.  
Awaiting a new beginning  
That never came