

BREAK POEMS

Assembled by James Pendle from the lines of poems submitted to the 2025 Chiswick Book Festival Young Poets Competition.

Introduction

The theme of the 2025 Chiswick Book Festival Young Poets Competition was “Break”. Most of the winning and commended poems used that theme.

Breaking Free

A simple but wonderful, colourful thought
the thought of breaking free

To change the straight,
take the zig zag,
break the limit,
crack the ice in the pond,
shatter the windows¹

But how to do it?

How indeed?

We need a plan

For breaking free.²

¹ Break, by Lea Parrot-Goia First

² Breaking Free, Blue Roberts. Commended.

At a Desk

Sometimes I feel angry and want to scream and shout,

I feel a storm is brewing inside and out:³

tummy turning, feelings rush out of my body.⁴

Sometimes in life you just need a break.⁵

Stretch out your limbs, let your mind unwind,

leave tasks and projects far behind.

A walk in the sun, a sip of tea,

small joys that set your spirits free.

Then back to the desk, refreshed and keen,

with clearer vision, sharper, serene.

The break was a gift, a moment to pause,

You're renewed and ready to tackle the cause.⁶

³ Me and My Emotions, Jessica Gardner. Second

⁴ Starting New, Harry Peacock Rowan. Third

⁵ Sometimes you just need a break, India Goldsmith. Third

⁶ Break, Mirella Nikolova. Third

School Breaktime

French makes my head wonder,
maths makes my body
angry like thunder.⁷

The bell rings out, loudly, suddenly:
I jump out of my itchy polyester stockings
and I am swept up in the tsunami of students⁸

Snacks in pockets, shoes untied,⁹
we run so fast, we jump so high,
we try to catch the butterflies.¹⁰

Round and round the playground we run
laughing as loud as we can¹¹

Breaktime is over
all the kids moan.

There's nothing to hear
'cept a child going "groan".¹²

The excitement ends and it's back to learning.
And the world just keeps on turning.¹³

⁷ I Need A Break, Leah Lardieg. First

⁸ Snack Break, Althaea Kwasnicki. Second

⁹ The Breaktime Madnesses!!! Hadiyah Ibrahim. Commended

¹⁰ My Best Friend, Karima Aldewaihee. Third

¹¹ The Boy at Breaktime, Felix Levesques. Commended

¹² Time To Play, Harriet Pateras. Commended

¹³ Breaktime, Luke Grindal. Third

The long summer break

The school bell rings, we shout hooray,
time to pack the books away.

No more maths or English tests,
just lazy days and lots of rest.¹⁴

Flopping into bed like a falling leaf¹⁵

Breaking out in laughter

Waves break along the shore,
the sea is wild and furious.¹⁶

Crack! The surfboard splits:
“Wipe Out!”.

There’s laughter,
but we are together
as one.¹⁷

¹⁴ Summer Fun. Youssara El-Briek. Third

¹⁵ Peace, Mariella Rowe. Commended

¹⁶ Dawn Breaks, Barney Elliott. Commended

¹⁷ Together As One, Mabel Price. Second.

An Owl

The rays of ethereal moonlight,
the glint of a Great Horned Owl,¹⁸
and I feel it so deep:
the calmness,
the loneliness.¹⁹

A Fox

A red flash in the distance,
I stopped to look around,
Peering at me was a fox,
As red as fire with eyes as hazel as mine.²⁰
Questions sparked in my mind like fireworks²¹

¹⁸ The Great Horned Owl, George Hollis. Commended

¹⁹ Night, Muyun Zhang. Commended.

²⁰ The Fox, Charlotte MacDonald. First

²¹ Snack Break, Althaea Kwasnicki. Second

A Lizard

Little lizard crawled silently,²²

Bang!

Lightning wallops the wet, soggy ground,

rain assaults the landscape, thunder pierces my ears.²³

Rain... it's a helpless cry,

all through the night.²⁴

Little lizard crawled silently.²⁵

Spoken by a hungry polar bear

First a crack, then a shake,

soon the ice starts to break.

A grand ice breaker,

smashing its way.

Penguins disband, fish swim away²⁶

²² The Mass of Green, Alex Obhlidal. Commended
²³ A Break in the Weather, Adin Zukic. Commended
²⁴ Rain, Arham Umer. Third
²⁵ The Mass of Green, Alex Obhlidal. Commended
²⁶ Break, Charlie Peacock Rowan. Third

Spoken by a tired horse

Here he comes towards me now,
marching triumphantly,
believing in the victorious.²⁷

Strutting with purpose
he slides into my saddle.

I start to buck,
he grasps the reigns,
I start to weaken,
I start to yield.

He grins.²⁸

Broken Man

The Broken Man across the street
scraping along crumpled feet,
his chance at life all washed away,
all dreams and hope left to decay²⁹

Everyone is unique, different in their own way.
Learn to accept yourself, each and every day.³⁰

Don't Doodle with the Devil!

²⁷ Wimbledon Play-off Final, Harry Jorgensen. Third

²⁸ Broken Will, Laila Prevett. Commended.

²⁹ The Broken Man, James Hamilton. Third

³⁰ Poem One - Take a Break, Amila Abdrakhmanova. First

So here he was at the river with no name, doing nothing,
just sat on the bank breathing slowly being one with the world.

The buzzing of his watch woke him from his sleepy trance,
the devil in disguise ending the peace,
dragging his soul back to the hellscape called the city.³¹
Don't Doodle with the Devil!³²

Breaking up

Your words left a taste, bitter and tart,
you've broken your promise,
but not my heart.³³

Friendships are like pots:
most get chipped.

So that we learn how we build them strong,
some have to break.³⁴

³¹ Break (Year 6), Thomas Beard. Second

³² Don't Doodle with the Devil, Miles Breen. Commended

³³ My Heart is Strong, Sophia Rajah. Commended.

³⁴ Friendship as a Pot of Clay, Gilly Roper Rawson. Second.

Heartbreak

I dropped my mug — it hit the floor,
it cracked and smashed beside the door.

Sometimes my heart begins to ache,
it feels a little like a break.³⁵

The heart does not break to die,
it breaks to widen, to multiply.
A single pulse, then all things bloom,
the light escapes from every wound.³⁶

Parents

Parents can be anxious,
parents can be curious.
If you don't feed your goldfish,
parents will be furious.
But sometimes parents sway
because parents are human
in every way.³⁷

³⁵ Break 2 (Shards), Zarah Aboki. First.?

³⁶ Where the Heart Breaks the Universe Begins, Logan Fiddes. Second

³⁷ Parents Need A Break, Eleanor Sophia Larentzakis. Third.