

About this set of poems

These six poems were written on National Poetry Day, when The MERL held a series of poetry workshops for its 51 Voices project. The following pieces were created in response to biscuit tins from The MERL. The tins served as inspiration for sessions led by [writer and spoken word poet Desree](#). The tins were chosen to reflect inclusion of a Huntley and Palmers tin from Reading Museum in 51 Voices.

Charlotte Johnson – 'I was inspired by the biscuit tin and how they are often not used for biscuits at all. I have started writing poetry in the last couple of years, particularly since the pandemic where poetry has become very accessible. I regularly visit The MERL, but sometimes don't get past the shop of the café.'

Biscuit tin

I am pretending it's not there
Out of sight, out of mind, right?
Right?
Of course, tea doesn't need a biscuit.
The biscuit tin takes up space.
It is probably empty anyway.
Out of curiosity – that's all – I
Investigate.
It's my lucky day!
A safety pin, two £1 coins and a Werther's original.

Charlotte Johnson
7 October 2021



Huntley & Palmers tin (REDMG 1992.2.384)

Ruth Gavin – 'The poem I wrote in the evening workshop with Desree, inspired by her discussion about biscuit tins.'

The biscuit tin

There were always ginger nuts tainting the others
Taking over the tin – how typical!

I can see the blue tin in the cupboard
We had it for years
Forever in fact.
Is it still there?
Help! I'll have to see it again if it is.

And the familiar cups suddenly spring to mind
Stained with black tea like his teeth.

How many gallons and gallons of tea over 80 years?
How many biscuits?
How many kettles boiled
And sweetened words?

Ruth Gavin
7 October 2021



Huntley and Palmers 'Olden Times' tin (MERL 2012/409)

Nicola Tipler – 'Three minute poems... inspired by MERL's collection of biscuit tins. I used to write limericks 50 years ago, but nothing since! It was a great evening.'

The biscuit tin

Nostalgia as I look at the scene from bygone days
Rural settings with streams and tree,
Children playing with tops and hoops,
Before my time – my grandparents' time.

How do I feel?

Timeless object! I feel so pleased
that something, made so long ago,
is still in perfect working order.
No built in obsolescence, no plastic, no damage to the environment,
no need to replace or recycle!

Nicola Tipler
7 October 2021

Clive Tipler – 'Poems by Clive inspired by the Huntley and Palmers biscuit tin collection. This was the first time Clive had ever written a poem.'

Biscuits galore

I like biscuits that have chocolate on them, or jam in the middle.
I like shortbread biscuits, custard creams or even ginger,
I crave, most of all, chocolate digestives!

Biscuit tins

Some are blue, some are green – even tartan!
Red ones, yellow ones, no patterns – Spartan.
Square ones, round ones, long ones, thin and tall.
One golden rule, open and try them all!

Clive Tipler
7 October 2021



Huntley and Palmers 'Blacksmith' tin (MERL 2012/419)