

VIDEO – Forthview Primary launch their poetry book



PUPILS WELL VERSED IN DRAMATIC WARTIME TALES

A series of emotional First World War poems written by primary school children after watching the play War Horse have been transformed into a new book. The Edinburgh Reporter went up to Edinburgh Castle earlier this morning to meet Kayleigh-Louise, Ashley, Logan and William who were representing their school at the media call there. William read us a little of his poem and we spoke to Eileen Littlewood the headteacher of Forthview Primary to find out what they will do with the profits of the book.

P6 and P7 pupils from Forthview Primary School saw the National Theatre's ground-breaking production at the Festival Theatre Edinburgh earlier this year. They were so inspired by the show they decided to write a series of poems based on the experiences of Scottish people during the war.

These have now been turned into an anthology, *Stolen Lives*, was recited for the first time at a special launch event at the Festival Theatre this morning after the photo call.

The poems were read out by actors from the critically-acclaimed First World War play [Regeneration](#), which is currently on a week long run at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh (Tuesday 30 September – Saturday 4 October).

The pupils watched [War Horse](#) as part of the START project run in conjunction with the Festival Theatre which aims to make cultural venues more accessible to young people. They were then helped in turning the poems into a book by author Mary

Turner Thomson – it was during one of her workshops that P7 pupil Demmi-Leigh Brammer came up with the title *Stolen Lives*.

Demmi said: “We wrote our poems after seeing War Horse and hearing some World War 1 poems. I thought of the title, ‘Stolen Lives’ because the soldiers were killed by complete strangers as if their lives were being stolen from them.

“I am really excited about the launch. I think it’s going to be really fun but, at the same time, I am quite nervous about singing in front of lots of people.”

Forthview Primary School Head Teacher Eileen Littlewood said: “The pupils were inspired to write these wonderful poems after seeing War Horse as they were captivated by the story of Joey and the historical events of the First World War.

“The pupils really are very talented writers and thanks to their excellent teachers they’ve succeeded in writing very beautiful, atmospheric poems.”

Mary Turner Thomson the book’s publisher said: “I was very impressed with the pupils’ poetic endeavours and felt they had put a lot of effort and emotion into their contributions. This whole project has been an amazing experience and a reminder of the horrors the people who fought in the war went through.

“It’s good that a whole new generation of our children are inspired to think about their sacrifice 100 years since it began. These young poets, seeing their work in print within their very own book of poetry, will now remember and pass this on to the next generation as well.”

Cerin Richardson, Learning & Participation Manager at the Festival and King’s Theatres, said: “Watching the inspirational War Horse led the pupils to taking part in some artist-led music, dance, puppetry and poetry workshops in

school, as part of the [START project](#) funded by the Princes Foundation for Children and the Arts.

“The children produced some extraordinary work and this encouraged them to write the poems included here in their book, *Stolen Lives*. The Festival Theatre is delighted to have been part of the process which has led to this wonderfully imaginative and beautifully written book of poems.”

Today’s launch also coincides with Historic Scotland, who run Edinburgh Castle, launching their new school project ‘Learning about Scotland’s First World War’.

Craig Fletcher, Senior Learning Manager at Historic Scotland, said: “We are delighted to be working with Forthview Primary School and other partners on this new project which allows young people to explore their local heritage, whilst learning more about the war and its impact on Scottish people.

“Historic Scotland will work in partnership with local schools during the commemorative period for the First World War. Pupils will visit historic properties to explore buildings, museums and objects as they investigate and discover the impact of the War in Scotland and discover real people’s stories. They will also have the opportunity to participate in interactive workshops enabling them to reflect on their learning experiences.”

Special thanks also go to officers from the City of Edinburgh Council’s Integrated Literacy Strategy team and students/tutor from the Illustration Department of Edinburgh College of Art who worked with the pupils to illustrate their poems.