



Pilot Poetry

We currently display three poems in the Museum Learning Centre. All written by World War II pilots.

Two were written by Battle of Britain Pilot **William Walker**.

One of them he wrote for children at a primary school local to him. William Walker is remembered by a commemorative bench in the Museum's gardens – he visited the Museum just before it was officially opened and before he died aged 99 in 2012.



To the Nine Year-Old Class at Felsted School

You must always be aware
Of Britain's battle in the air,
So that you can tell the story
Of bravery, victory and glory;
When many volunteers who flew,
Were only twice as old as you,
They, quickly, had to learn to fly,
To fight a battle in the sky.
Before dawn when pilots rose from bed,
They knew that danger lay ahead,
And thought of friends killed just the day before,
Who would not know a peace nor end of war.
Every day was much the same,
As hordes of German bombers came,
To bomb our cities far and wide,
From early morn till eventide.
The youth of Britain fought and flew,
For freedom and a life for you.

A moment of History

Our destiny hung by such a slender thread,
And no one knew what future lay ahead,
When every squadron flew against the Hun
And victory seemed so far from won.
That moment is remembered still,
When Churchill knew reserves were nill.
History now recalls the story
Of near defeat that turned to glory.



The third poem is by a World War II pilot **John Gillespie Magee Jnr.**

John spent most of his childhood in Canada but did spend some of his later school years in England. He had returned to Canada before the outbreak of war, and when he was old enough in 1940, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and returned to England to fly with the RAF. Sadly, he was killed in a flying accident in 1941.



High Flight

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, --and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of --Wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace

Where never lark or even eagle flew --

And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Also displayed in the Museum's Entrance Hall is a poem by WAAF **Patricia Clark**. Patricia worked as a Plotter during the Battle of Britain, and later became a Filterer. Her poem, however, does not commemorate the work she was doing, but instead commemorates pilots.



Children Look

Children as you're passing by
Look in the window at the sky.
Men fought there for you and me:
Fought and died to keep us free
From the invading enemy.

Many years have passed since then
But we must not forget those men.
Salute them, up there in the sky.
Remember them, as you pass by.