

## The Water of Leith - A Cento

The river comes from nothing.

Over intimidating hills,

Rain falls.

Drops

drip

Drips

Drop

Bounce from rock to rock

and

Ricochet.

Gently, forming into shape,

Intertwining

Through and over shining fragile rocks -

Ancient carvings deep in the ground.

Rills and rivulets

Scribe the cleughs,

Water bubbling

Water runnelling

A burn

Unravelling

Unfolding towards the sea.

Then, almost suddenly  
It turns to the winding whisper of larger waters  
Flows,  
Courses,  
A race and rush,  
A twisting and turning,  
Etching a map.  
Here, the water hurries and erupts  
Cascades and engulfs,  
But here is still and calm.

Its industry becomes our industry.

Water twisting, water turning,  
Rapids hurling  
Never at rest, constant motion -  
Mills appear, imploring the river's constant devotion.

And when that is done?

The past erupts,  
Disappears into a calm, wistful place.  
The water  
Engaging with the present,

With people passing by.

Birds are singing,  
Harmonising with the wind's unheard presence,  
Swiftling to the water, splashing, drinking,  
As if they are putting on a show.

A heron  
Stands slender upon the river slopes.  
It waits,  
Patient for its prey to arrive,  
Unwittingly.

Feathers, grey as a moonlit sky  
Its beak - orange - like the burning sun.

Its rapid dive  
Down into the water, allows his prey  
No reprieve  
From the punishment it will receive.

Its still stature manifests its discipline,  
Emphasised by its figure -  
Thin.

From trees that bow down,  
Obsequious, to the ever changing river,  
Leaves fall and float,  
Like green buttons on a silver thread.

Suddenly, a kingfisher!  
A blur of light,  
A blur of muddled colour,  
Pouring through the silhouette of golden-lit trees.  
A momentary pause, then again,  
A blur of light  
A blur of muddled colour.

The kingfisher waits,  
Camouflaged  
Then  
In a second,  
It is gone -

Beneath the bridge,  
Whose arch protects the water.  
Its reflection stills the rippled surface.

Night falls and hunting calls  
And the otter makes its way

Downstream.

Not

Heard

Nor

Seen.

With success it curves its head,

Silently gliding towards a bubbling fish,

And as it eats, disappears

Within

A

Second.

This watery path was once, long ago,

Carved by glaciers.

Now it carves a path through the

Busy city.

Ancient and forever new,

A silver thread

Spooling

Finally

Into the tapestry of the sea.

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## ***The Water of Leith - a Cento***

A **cento** is a patchwork poem – a poem made up from lines taken from other poems. It is a lovely way of writing collaboratively, where everyone can contribute.

This cento is created from lines and words written by pupils, inspired by the Water of Leith. It is intended to take you on something of a journey from the source of the river - high up in the Pentlands - to its end point - the sea, via the Firth of Forth.

It is also intended to capture the ebb and flow of the river, its quiet places and the points at which it races and runs.

This varied tempo has made the Water of Leith useful to industrialists in the past, who used it to power their mills, but also to us now, as an escape from the hurly burly of the city, a place for relaxation and recreation.

The Water of Leith is important to a diverse range of plants and animals too, some of which are referenced in the cento.

We hope you will follow the flow of words as you would follow the flow of the river, and that they give at least a sense of this beautiful green corridor that runs through the heart of Edinburgh.