



Rotherham Young Writers

Poems inspired by Arthur Wharton

The Race **By Lyz Brown**

From Gold Coast to Gold Star and Gold Medal,
You lit up the North coast of this little island
With your resplendent African sparkle,
A smile that seemed to make your sprint
Just that little bit more incredible.

The world's fastest man before Usain Bolt was
Even a twinkle in his granddaddy's eye.
The black panther who shone
Brighter than white
Despite the plight
Of a coloured man at that time.

It's been a century and the battle isn't over,
Prejudice still divides the land
That you did so much to unite.
But over the new stadium
Just off Centenary Way,
High above the emerald turf
Where Rotherham United play,
There is a golden star twinkling in the onyx night.
There you're still sprinting, Arthur.
The endless celestial chase.
If you wanted to make history,
You've already won that race.



I am Arthur **Stephanie Hopkinson**

My heart beating, pounding
Against my chest
I rest
Flat-footed
Until my lips,
Stretch
Into a limber smile.
I lean forward
Feet in position
Waiting, straining,
With my ears
I listen
To the pulse of the crowds.
And then...
BOOM
The pistol cracks
And I launch myself
Forward into an attack
Flat against the wind.
Feet barely touching ground
To the sound of continents
Colliding, throbbing,
Pumping through my veins.

I am Arthur, African Panther,
Scottish Warrior
Running wild
Across dusty plains of heat,
Face covered in sweat and
The freshness
Of wild highland sleet.
I am Arthur, running a bridge
Across the divide.
With the determination
To succeed and
The ability to survive -
I cross the line.



Lungs bellow slower
As I jog to a halt and lower
My head, catch my breath
Then rise to stand like rock
While continents continue
to swirl and mix
Beneath my skin.

I gasp and breath in
The crowds, feel them pulsing
Restless through my veins,
As we breathe the same air and
Flat caps rain down.

Black **Katherine Henderson**

Darkie of all trades.
The talent.
Underestimated.
Undervalued.
Rewarded with the pit,
Like everyone.
Muscles put to more use.
In the underworld,
we're all black.

Underdogs laughing **Katherine Henderson**

It's good to prove people wrong
Laugh long and hard at their misconceptions
Laughing, getting on with it.
just putting in the work,
Waiting for the world to wake up.
Waiting for the ignorance to get



erased from journals and books -
Words of intellectuals who aren't so intelligent
But us - we're laughing, getting on with it -
It's the working class way.
The underdogs triumph.
We don't need those books,
if all they'll do is keep our minds
cold and shut.

The Hummingbird **Jess Wood**

They called him nigger, darkie
His walnut visage blackened their insight
But little did they know, his mission
Breathed the same sacred values, while his
Blood flowed with colours
Of contrasting worlds
From a sea captain
Who unlocked secret histories,
He found gold and a princess in Ghana -
Home to warrior kings.
From the hummingbird,
A spark of freedom within chains.
Arthur, birthed in Accra
Grew into England's soil
From riches to rags
Shaken from wings,
Lost in the race,
That opened the latch.
And set the hummingbird
Free.

Stories of Arthur **Dan Bennett**

Sitting in the corner like a rattlesnake,
Trapdoor spider
Waiting for it's pray



Body flexed ready to catch dinner.
That's Arthur, not darkie
His pate's not too thick.
He is a skylark
Larking about,
But boy can he catch,
Snatch the ball from the air.
He never hit the wall that some athletes hit
When they can't go on;
Because nothing could stop Arthur running.
And now he's finally remembered
Even though he's gone.
Where his grave sat unknown;
Now stands his headstone.
And you can still hear stories of Arthur
In his old age.
All muscle;
Looking like a grey hound,
They always used to say
He could catch pigeons.
Down at the Miners' Welfare Ground.

Arthur the Jaguar **Rosie Brown**

You found yourself in British savannas
A jaguar growling at the greenness of lions,
Petty insults and challenges.
First longing for the arid,
Open spaces of home,
Then realising that lush grass
Holds your future.
You run.
Blood pulsing but skin cold,
Born for humid air.
Running keeps you warm and
Reminds you of who you are.
Your power soars, legs gain speed.
With your paws barely touching the track



You win.
Hearts and minds.
An offering from exceeding the rest
You walk away a champion,
The only jaguar to beat the lions.
Yet, until now, you remained
Uncarved in the trees of history.

Absence
Brianna Staton

You were Yorkshire's King Arthur,
Sent from Ghana.
An absence of memories,
Where they airbrushed you
From history,
But they can never
Steal from reality,
That you lived
The Beautiful Game.

Scott Wright
Mixed race

I was in a race,
A mixed race.
With me seen only as black.
White lines separated us.
The only way was forward.
I always reached the finish line.
But history never let me win the race.

This kidder
Dan Hardy

This kidder, I tell thee no lie,
Runs faster than a France man can put up a flag.
And don't get him mad, because I tell thee,
He punches balls
Further than a man can kick 'em.



Arthur Wharton: 1865 to 1930

The World's First Black Professional Footballer

www.arthurwharton.info

And if you think you can get a ball past him,
His guy, his guy!
He'll clamp it between his legs, kick it back and tell you to take another shot.
You like a pint in a Rotherham pub?
You could have quenched your thirst in one of his boozers.
Passed around banter with him down a Doncaster mine.
Now this kid did so much, but barely earned a penny.
A black man in a white society
Loved by the community.
Arthur Wharton -
Drink to that.
He deserved more fame than any footballer today.

Too Fast Will Banks

Too fast for a suit,
Too fast for the coast,
Too fast for the ship,
He's the fastest by most.

Too fast for the school,
Too fast for the cross,
Too fast for degrees,
Too fast for the coin toss.

Too fast for the goal,
Too fast for the bat
Too fast for his boots,
Too fast for the track.

Too fast for his gloves,
Too fast for the post,
Too fast for his shorts,
He's the fastest by most.

Too fast for canaries,
Too fast for the coal,
Too fast for his pickaxe,



Too fast for the dole.

Too fast for the pumps,
Too fast for the darts,
Too fast for pool tables,
Too fast for his heart.

Too fast for ignorance,
Too fast for his enemies
Too fast for his brilliance
Too fast for our memories.

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Legend **Rosie Brown**

Once a homesick royalist
Longing for your gold coast home
Missionary man who's mission turned to running free.
At the top of each game,
Football, cycling, racing,



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Out leaping towards your aims.
Soon you were racing and running for home;
Defeating the threat of racism upon your rightful thrown.
World record set, saved
Then erased with blank grave.
Now we dig up your memory
So new shoots can grow
In the richness of your foundations