

## *Children, 1914*

They're 'being brave', these Belgian refugees,  
doing what they have been told by mothers  
and fathers far away now oversees;  
patiently trembling, sisters and brothers,  
each with an emptied, newly orphaned look  
it's easy to imagine. Is it?  
Wide-eyed, sleep-starved, twisting hands, they fidget;  
one grins while his companion hugs a book.

Now in the mind's sincere commemoration  
these boys and girls stand silent at the gates,  
and when my own remembering generation  
in time is called upon, and hesitates;  
when we are lost, unsure where our place is,  
let the compass be such children's faces.

*James Manlow*

*Poet Laureate for Bournemouth*

*a poem to commemorate the centenary of the First World War*

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