

**Writing prompt: underwater.**

**(To be read with the appropriate accents, as required)**

Billy's hearing had not improved over the years. In fact it had deteriorated considerably. The issue wasn't helped by the fact that, at the age of 87, his children had insisted that Billy should move down from Bolton, where he had lived all his life, to live with them in South London. As it was, Billy had been struggling to make sense of the forms people made with their lips when he lived in Bolton. His introduction to the English spoken south of Watford Junction did not help. For Billy, *butter* was now 'b'a' and *water* was 'wa'a'.

Billy had always been an avid writer, and so, at his children's insistence, he joined the local writing group. When the group met, they were each given a writing prompt and, if anyone dared disturb the silence, once the prompt had been given, the wrath of the group's leader, Martin, or 'M'in', as Billy learnt he should call him, would descend upon them.

This was the writing prompt: *underwater*, or, as Billy had heard it, 'underwear'. This seemed a strange prompt to Billy, but having been brought up to be a polite Bolton boy, Billy did not want to cause any problems, so he just got on with the task. He considered describing underwear that he had encountered as a young man in Bolton, a place where the word 'bra' was spoken with a fearsome determination that would surely intimidate any potential unstrapper's efforts, should the wearer not be inclined towards any uncoupling (to quote Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin).

So Billy wrote his poem:

*Once I saw a bra  
It was not from afar  
In fact it was so near  
Its wearer called me 'dear'.*

Reading his work to the group, Billy smiled with pride, basking in his poetic genius. Then Martin intervened. 'If that's what you people from 'up North' think is great lit., you should go home, 'cos it's a pile of ...' Fortunately for Billy, his lack of hearing meant that he missed the final word.

And do you know something? The rest of the group felt so sorry for this lovely man from 'Up North', that he was awarded that week's first prize, the Gold Medal, based on the 'writing prompt'. Billy, of course, heard the award as 'The 'old medal', which, as he reflected, was what a man of his age might expect, after all.

Well done, Billy!