Perseverance Through Words Transcript

A Tribute to Christy Nolan

# Submission 1 – Aoife O’Donovan

## Zealous mercurial dreams were about to be realised (Written music piece)

"Zealous Mercurial Dreams Were About to Be Realised" is inspired by the work of Christy Nolan, the extraordinary Irish author and poet who overcame his challenges of cerebral palsy to create impactful Irish literature. His dedication to his artistic voice and the power of his words stand as a testament to the human drive to communicate and create. Growing up with dyslexia meant that I often struggled with finding the beauty and enjoyment of the written word. Instead, I discovered a relationship with music, learning through listening and feeling. Music became a language that spoke to me with a clarity, a world where my understanding flourished through sound and emotion. This piece, "Zealous Mercurial Dreams Were About to Be Realised," in its energetic bursts and fluid shifts, reflects a journey of discovery of expression. The "zealous" quality speaks to the passionate drive to create and express, while the "mercurial" nature embodies the freedom and fluidity I found in connecting with music on my own terms. Ultimately, this piece is an expression of the joy and liberation found in the expression of language. It's offered as a tribute to the spirit of Christy Nolan and a reflection of my own unique path towards the joy of language.

# Submission 2 – Avantika Singhal

## Personal Essay

### Which of the following quotes from Christy Nolan did you use to inspire your entry?

"Now could he ever get his chance to let folk see what they thought never existed?" (p.53).

I have written a personal essay about how I got through an especially sunny day as an albino. On many occasions, the sunlight is manageable but on many, it isn't. That's what happened during a bookshop-run and I've tried to capture how I made it to my destination without bumping into a fellow human or a pole. It also captures how I am comfortable and proud telling everyone about my condition, which didn't happen overnight, but I am glad that it has eventually.

## Personal Essay – Avantika Singhal

**"Now could he ever get his chance to let folk see what they thought never existed?" (p.53)** There’s panic. There’s hesitation. And, there’s one recurring thought – you all are just silhouettes to me: black, mobile, and unpredictable.

I let this thought consume me as I stand in the sharp Irish sunlight on a street somewhere in St. Stephen’s Green, shielding my eyes despite wearing sunglasses. Can I see anything clearly? No. You all are a blur and by “you” I mean all the Dubliners spreading in all directions, going about their day – oblivious to a middle-aged albino girl who can’t seem to see straight despite eye protection. This happens more than you’d expect. Usually, when I am alone, I walk it off, praying that the sunbeams become kinder in time and that I can make my way to my destination without being run over or pushed down on the buzzing pavements. However, when I am walking with someone, say a friend or family member and the Sun is reaching unprecedented heights, my pace slows, my steps falter and the eye-shielding is ten times more vigorous. Today, the Sun is a little less forgiving even though I am alone.

By some miracle and a sprinkle of perseverance, I push through the shapes and successfully make my way to Books Upstairs, an unmistakably blue bookshop labelled as “Ireland’s oldest”. The need to be surrounded by books is all-consuming at this juncture of time and space and it also gives me a chance to hide from the Sun. I enter gracelessly and my demeanour changes instantly. The colours, the titles, the bookworms – oh so tempting! But am I here to splurge on a trending hardcover? No. The reason why I am here is because I am somewhat of a Hot Chocolate connoisseur and I must test all the milky-chocolatey concoctions I can get my glove-clad hands on. I make my way upstairs (no book in hand, mind you) and awkwardly order my forever-favourite beverage. The barista is a 20-something college-going girl who couldn’t stop yapping about the latest Hunger Games book before I ordered. That was until she wasn’t riveted by my accent – which is an inauthentic and not-so-compelling mixture of Indian and American. However, she is invested now, and asks me without preamble, “Where are you from?” Here we go again. Time to explain how someone with ginger hair (I dye it), violet, nystagmus-riddled eyes, and a pale complexion sounds like an Indian. Where is she from?!, her brain must be toiling to trace my roots. I tend to cherish and detest such interactions. There have been so many ever since I came to Dublin that I can almost predict how the person is going to react to my origin story. Once I solve the mystery for them, I do feel liberated; like I have just reinstated to myself that I am comfortable in my skin. I offer her a brief explanation gently, “India, but I am albino.” It's no surprise when she raises her eyebrows and opens her mouth in an ‘o’ shape. Yes, yes, cue the surprise. She has finally spotted an Indian-looking Irish young woman in the modern-day wilderness. Huzza! Within seconds, the shocked ‘o’ turns into an understanding ‘o’ and she hands me my drink with a tiny smile on her face. She’s absorbing the information and trying to be polite at the same time. I get it. I always do. I should have never existed. Yet I do. I am the best kind of anomaly. One that knocks you off your feet and forces you to reconsider what you think you know about biology, considering both my parents wear brown skins back home with pride and love. Albinism is a hindrance sometimes. Crossing the road, reading tiny fonts, spotting someone from afar…But it’s also a gift and the biggest gift I can give myself is the gift of self-acceptance. I may not have superpowers but I still possess the ability to stupefy people with my looks and my genealogy. For me, it doesn’t get better than that.