**8th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Title of Poem**: Advice from a Caterpillar

**Poet**: Rachel Rooney

Link to poem: <https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/poem/advice-from-a-caterpillar/>

Link to audio recording of the poem:

<https://youtu.be/u-p4kpFBtQY>

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**About the Poet**

­­­Rachel Rooney was born in London, the fifth of six children, and now lives in Brighton, Sussex. She trained and works as a special needs teacher, along with visiting schools for poetry readings and workshops. Her first collection of poems for older children, The Language of Cat, was the 2011 Poetry Book Society children’s choice. It also won the 2012 CLPE Award and was long listed for the Carnegie Medal.  Her second collection, My Life as a Goldfish, was published by Frances Lincoln in 2014 and shortlisted for the CLiPPA in 2015. A Patch of Black, her first rhyming picture book, was published by Macmillan Children’s Books in 2012. Her next book, A Kid in My Class, illustrated by Chris Rdell and published by Otter-Barry Books is out in 2018.

Rooney’s poems often revisit ideas and figures familiar from fairy tales and myths, as well as from everyday life, putting an original and modern spin on their predicaments. In her daring and vivid imagination, we learn the details of the language of cats, the real feelings and fears of Russian dolls and mermaids – even things as unassuming and ordinary as numerals and letters become in her hands a fox’s ear-tip, a pirate’s hook, a chameleon’s tongue.

**Poem:**

Advice from a Caterpillar

By Rachel Rooney

When I was egg, I too, clung onto leaf  
in shaded safety, hidden underside.  
And fastened by a pinprick of belief  
I dared to dream I was a butterfly.

A hunger hatched. I ate the home I knew  
then inched along the disappearing green.  
In shedding every skin that I outgrew,  
became a hundred times the size I’d been.

And now I’m spinning silk to fix my spot.  
Outside remains. Inside I’m changing things.  
This caterpillar’s planning on the lot;  
proboscis and antennae, four bright wings.

So keep on clinging on, my ovoid one.  
For who you are has only just begun.

**Vocabulary:**

Proboscis: a scientific word for a tongue

Ovoid: something that is the shape of an egg

**Discussion Guide:**

Our theme for this year is Change. What does this poem have to do with Change?

What are the stages in development for a caterpillar before it becomes a butterfly? Do you know the words in Armenian *and* English?

If you were a butterfly what colors would you be? Where would you fly to?

What is the poet trying to tell us in the last line of the poem?