

That's What Rowing's For...

Stumble down the pathway to the Boatshed's warming glow;
Drawn like moths to candles, they gather, moving slow -
Bags are dumped and dinghies rigged as greeting grunts are passed;
Coaches' keen eyes watching to see who turns up first and last.

Shuffled names on whiteboard as the crews in turn take shape,
And the racks are drawn out once again with that familiar grinding scrape.
And oars laid out like toothpicks; different tape to mark each set;
We look outside and wonder, "How much darker can it get?"
**No two days are quite the same; you don't know what's in store,
But be fairly sure it's going to hurt – that's what rowing's for.**

Then each white boat is taken out and rolled onto the water;
Boys strap their feet into their shoes, like lambs unto the slaughter.
It's Groundhog Day down at the shed three times every week,
With coaches hoarse from yelling and kids too tired to speak.

Leaving from the landing and heading into night;
Depart into the darkness and return with dawn's first light.
Pieces up and down the reach; to the Traffic Bridge and back -
Bow four; stroke four; row in pairs – to rest and then attack.
**In endless repetition, the well-timed strike of every oar -
A crew in perfect harmony, that's what rowing's for**

Hoses spray on resting boats as others dinghies stack
And keys on corks are thrown about, with Fordy keeping track.
Then rush to get to breakfast, thanks to Joan who drives the bus
And try hard to stay awake all day through Lit and Calculus.

Sundays down at Jacob's – up and down and up again
And over to the other hill – up and down times ten;
And after school three times a week in Phys Ed's stifling heat
To bench and curl and press and step, and with ergo scores to beat;
**With dumb-bells, mats and fit-balls spread across the weights room floor;
Building up your abs and guns - perhaps that's what rowing's for.**

Saturday is race day and we tow towards the Canning;
Establishing the beachhead takes much co-ordinated planning.
Some days the river's rough and on others it's like glass;
Boys hunched over, sit boats up and wait for time to pass
**Snatched and shouted conversations above the outboard's roar;
A spirit that's unique to us – that's what rowing's for.**

And parents huddle at the tent and strain to see each race
And in between the chatting, hope is etched on every face.
Morning tea is served each week – a competitive affair,
With tea and sandwiches and cake and not a scone to spare.

Boys hide under sleeping bags and play their i-pod tunes,
And dream of when it's over and a lazy afternoon;
As coaches rig the boats up right, so they're set to strike;
Just take care on the footpath: "Bike! Bike! Bike! Bike! Bike!"
**The race-caller's voice is frantic above the crowd's dull roar;
The building of community, that's what rowing's for.**

And then you're at the start line and they call, "Attention! Go!"
Three-quarter; half; three-quarter; full – and then you really row,
And past Deepwater Point you rush, heading to the north,
The splash of blades, and seats on runners slicing back and forth;

Within the last five hundred and every muscle aches
And this is where you find out exactly what it takes;
The rating shifts up one more gear; watch the boat accelerate
And the coxswain shouts commandments and tries to steer straight.
**Across the line, three cheers ring out, exhausted to the core;
Respecting others' efforts too – that's what rowing's for.**

At the final big regatta and at the final finish post
There's the title for the taking by the crew that wants it most,
And each boy strains with every ounce of inner strength he owns
Every sinew, every fibre, and every aching bone –
**To lay it all upon the line, although you're tired and sore;
And see how much you've got inside – that's what rowing's for.**

And when the season's over and we've tried to claim the prize
And we're so close to that nice sleep-in once the boats are winterised,
Know that life moves on and chances come, regardless of your station
And the chances of success improve with renewed determination.
**As we punch the code in one last time and double lock the door,
We might stop to ask the question, "Just what is rowing for?"**

And the lessons that you learn may not always spring to mind,
But they'll stand you in good stead as you face life's daily grind.
For you may face a lot of demons, disappointments, trials and strain,
But your rowing days will help you deal much better with such pain.
**To give it everything you've got, and then a little more;
Having courage to risk failure – that's what rowing's for.**

Relying on your crewmates and knowing they rely on you;
Committing to a greater cause to see what you can do;
The efforts of a group can add up to something greater;
And although you might not see this now, you will, sooner or later.
**There's a sense of satisfaction – you've never worked so hard before;
That you gave your all and triumphed – that's what rowing's for.**

To realise there are times in life when the slightest slip spells doom,
But that collective strength can overcome and help to lift the gloom;
To recognise not everything in life will go to plan,
But to understand, when all seems lost, on occasions it still can.
**To stand together proudly, shouting "SCC wha wha!"
To dare to dream of greatness – that's what rowing's for.**

So when they ask the question and they laugh and condescend,
And they wonder why you train so hard and give up your weekend;
Why you sacrifice your school work and you blister feet and hands;
You can try to tell them something they just may not understand:
**You can tell them quite correctly, but in a modest way for sure,
"It's for building up my character, that's what rowing's for."**