



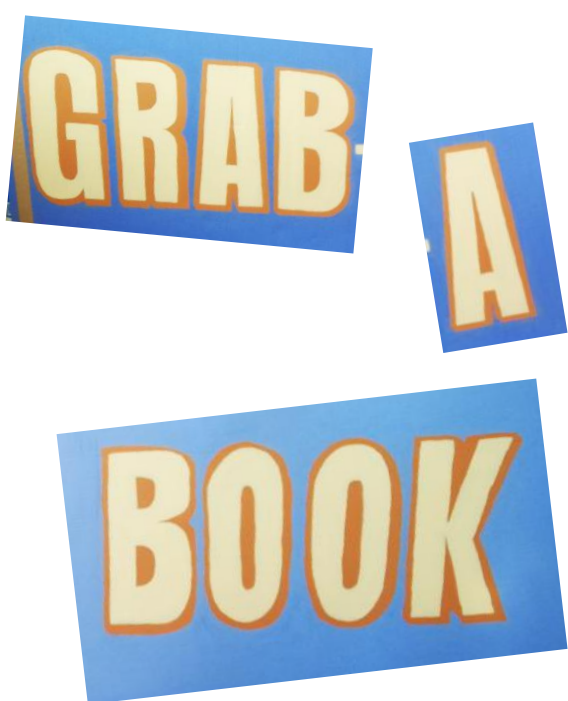
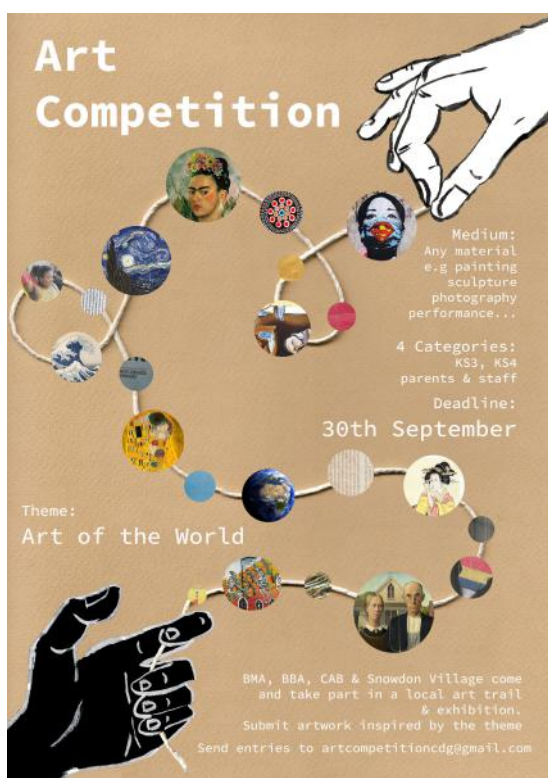
## Community Development Group

Welcome to the second edition of the CDG Newsletter, the final edition for this year.

The Creative Writing Competition is the main subject of this Newsletter and makes this something of a long read. So do try and find a quiet moment to read through extracts from some of the entries, together with the winners whose work is printed in full. They are an incredible display of talent from students across the Academy.

### Art Trail and Competition

A reminder that that the Art competition will remain open through to the new academic year so there is plenty of time for our artists to work on entries right through the summer. We will be developing the plans for the Art trail that will follow and should have some updates early in September.



### Other News

There are some exciting plans being worked on in a collaboration between various departments around displays which hopefully you will be able to spot when term starts again.

We have received some fantastic donations of books for our "Grab a Book" initiative which will be run as a pop-up and allow students to select books to take away and keep. Thank you to everyone who contributed, we have almost turned one of our English classrooms in a second hand book shop!

Plus if you are looking for something to fill some time.....we've been asked to include details of the Keep Doing Good NCS Programme – details below.

### Do something amazing this Summer Holiday

Take part in the new Keep Doing Good NCS Programme with Robins Foundation for FREE.

Specifically designed for young people between the ages of 15-17 the NCS Programme offers the chance to have fun, make new friends, and learn new skills from a range of Bristolian celebrities whilst also helping the country get back on its feet.

With the lockdown slowly being lifted and things starting to go back to "normal" it's your chance to help get the country back to business. Bristol City Robins Foundation will be delivering two, two-week programmes based within the home of Bristol City FC, Ashton Gate Stadium. The first programme commences Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> while the second programme starts on 17<sup>th</sup> August. It is also completely FREE. Create your very own social action project to help rebuild your local community, pick up new skills, and create a positive change to restart the summer. If you are ready to get back out there and do something amazing with your friends this summer then this is it. 'Keep Doing Good' is an amazing opportunity for you to support Bristol and help tackle community's issues that already existed or have emerged due to COVID-19. Make no doubt, the safety of you and our team is paramount to us and we will do everything to ensure that you are safe whilst on the programme with us. For more information and to sign up contact Carly – [carly.price@bcfc.co.uk](mailto:carly.price@bcfc.co.uk) / 07831 182724



### Thank you

To all of the staff and volunteers who support the CDG, to Kerry McCarthy MP for arranging a trip to the Houses of Parliament for our competition winners and to the Mayor of Bristol for recording a personal congratulation to all of the entrants.

### And so to the main event.

### 'Suddenly Everything Changed'

Students have picked up their pens, pecked at their keyboards and plucked at their imaginations in an amazing way during lockdown. They went for BMA's 'Suddenly Everything Changed' writing competition in a big way – and what follows, in this big newsletter, are the highlights.

[Judges' feedback on the competition, sponsored by the Community Development Group](#)



# ‘Suddenly Everything Changed’

## Judges’ feedback on the BMA lockdown writing competition, sponsored by the Community Development Group

*‘You must be thinking, “Well I can’t fly, can I?” but if you want to, you can. If you really want to fly, then create some wings. But in truth, your real wings are in your heart and they set you free.’*

With these wonderful lines from his entry, **Ayaan Z** summed up the great writing in this competition. BMA writers really created wings - and they flew in every sort of direction!

The ‘Suddenly Everything Changed’ theme was interpreted both positively and negatively. As **George K** in his strong entry explained, *‘Some saw it as a curse, hating this new way of living, constantly miserable, not making good use of their time. Others, saw it as a blessing, deciding to put all this extra time on their hands to good use, to better themselves, learn a new skill, improve.’*

Unsurprisingly, many responses reflected the horrible difficulties and the negatives of lockdown. Some writers chose to do this through fiction. **Sam T** opened his piece thriller-style with *‘All alone. In the middle of nowhere. Moments from death’* while the writing partnership of **Amelia P** and **Lily G** conjured up the following nightmarish situation:

*The sun is so bright now, it must be morning and I can hear the birds chirping and the dew on the grass is so shiny. I’m running as fast as I can, I’m so confused and lost, but I just keep running, to get as far away as I can. Through the trees I can see smoke and the outline of a small cottage, “HELP, HELP ME PLEASE” I shout, so out of breath.*

**Emilio C’s** powerful story described how *‘I had just lost my best friend. I felt like the devil took my soul away. I struggled but I still ran as fast as I could to the car and told his dad everything. He ran to see and I waited in the car. I waited and waited. Then I heard a gun-shot. But his dad never came back...’*

**Esther E** used a ‘spark plugs’ simile in her impressive entry:

*Suddenly, the front gate groaned in agony as I felt the presence of somebody. I had this strong feeling that he was someone to be feared. His footsteps sounded rehearsed; each step identical to the other. I was clothed with panic which started like spark plugs going off in my abdomen.*

**Grace O** deployed great vocabulary from the very start of her unsettling tale full of description which, in Mr.Parham’s view, ‘painted a hard and harsh world’:

*As the two of them walked to the school entrance side by side, a police car rolled up near to where they were standing. A big burly man and a diminutive young lady with prominent facial features like that of a man began to walk up to Shawn and his friend.*

*'Sorry, are you Shawn Brown?' asked the lady adjusting her hair.  
'What do you want? I've done nothing wrong!'*

From **Abdul S** there was some chilling symbolism:

*All exists in this lawless world. There was murder like it was a game. Ogres, slimes, even dragons getting evaporated for our own gain. The strong get stronger and the weak don't make it in this world.*

**Raeanna S's** keyboard created another terrifying atmosphere:

*The hallways were torn and gloomy, the air transformed into dark clouds and what once towered over everything now remained as rubble as all the other buildings towered over it... The fire engulfed everything. Nobody had got out in time. Except me...*

**Yoyo E** sent in an instantly compelling script from the world of therapy:

*JENNY: It makes me uncomfortable because you know the answer.*

*MARK: But why can't you say it?*

*JENNY: Why is a murderer my therapist?*

*MARK: I didn't do it.*

*JENNY: I've seen the footage...*

Many writers found enough to be alarmed about in our current reality and therefore stayed, like **Bianca C**, in the realm of non-fiction:

*We were like, "It's in China, it's very far away from England, so we don't have to worry so much." 2020 Just started and already everything was dying..? Australia's Fires, which burnt everything down. Most of the animals were dying. Then America and Iran had a few disagreements. WORLD WAR 3 ALMOST BEGAN. Next was the helicopter crash when basketball player Kobe, his daughter and a few other people died. Then this deadly virus came about ... I'm not sure myself if I'm stuck in a nightmare, or not. Then on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, an innocent man was killed by a police officer because of the colour of his skin. His name was George Floyd. This caused millions of people to protest for what was right!! Some were peaceful, some were NOT. I really wouldn't be surprised if aliens invade Earth right now. What didn't happen this year? [Dr.Langdon praised the 'keen use of voice' and Mr.Parham found this a 'good use of the list technique']*

**Amna A** spoke for many of us in the following excellent extract:

*I must confess that, rather than my writing power, my typing power has increased with the days passed by. My school has changed the dates of tests and exams. Our daily socialized school life has been tarnished. Additionally what's hurting me the most is the uncertainty of when we could be able to join our school.*

And **Jack O'B** covered similar ground, concluding with the neat line, 'Weekends weren't like weekends, holidays were not holidays anymore' while **Sophie S** memorably declared that 'this virus is reaching with its tentacles around us, choking every bit of normality out of our lives and society.'

**Jasper C** turned to poetry to describe the everyday lockdown routine, ending powerfully with,

*Monday to Friday, I repeat the above*

while **Julian J's** poetic voice produced the haunting line,

*One day, I will be allowed to play.*

**Ameera K** used one of her four entries to muse on the unknown future:

*Will I be able to adjust? There are so many thoughts, this invisible monster has stolen the lives of people, only their memories remain.*

**Chiara FN** agreed in the second verse of her memorable poem:

*Now the world we live in is a different one,  
Social distancing is the norm,  
GCSE pupil's work has been undone,  
And education transformed.*

And, empathising herself into a student's shoes, parent **Pippa YC** gave us a neat contemporary take with this verse from her cleverly rhyming poem:

*My home is now school,  
online lessons aren't cool!  
Home's not the place  
I'd rather learn face-to-face.*

**KB A** took the long view:

*It suddenly feels like we are back to the time of the world wars that we're always learning about in history lessons. I feel like the society has drastically changed and I wish I could go back to how things used to be.*

For **Lola I** it was the future rather than the past which inspired some very troubling and powerful dystopian writing. As Mr.Parham put it, she 'weaved true experience into something much more fantastical':

*I don't know why the prime minister allowed guns in the UK again. I guess after quarantine, people wanted protection, but I find it made the whole situation*

worse. After being stuck with no human communication for seven years, we all had to make a really big effort to try to bring the norm of social interactions back. I was actually in reception when the isolation started so I don't remember how it was in full lockdown. What I do know is that the older people of gen-z are all stuck in mental facilities.

**Mairaj F** dealt with the challenge by writing a moving letter to her future self:

*At this point no one expected anything bad to appear but our expectations turned out to be like dreams that won't come true. I hope you, the future me, could change everything and live a better life than I am now.*

For other writers though, the glass was very much half full and they chose to put a more positive spin on 'Suddenly Everything Changed'. Two brilliant short entries can be seen as, first, a personal and, second, a public positive:

*One day I woke up and found myself transformed into blocks of Lego. I was in pieces, but things started to click back into place. (Isaac C)*

*Colston drowned in the tears of all those he sold. (Ameera K)*

**Isabella C** wrote through the pain to find human warmth in the NHS:

*Beep, beep, beep. The little girl looked terrified in the vast hospital. The nurse stood over her, her face barely visible under the mask but her gentle hands and soothing voice calmed the sick child's thoughts. [Mr.Parham was especially praising of this work's clever 'circular construction'.]*

**Jessica H** was one of several strong entrants who offered hope with poetry: 'We will get through this,/Just have faith and,/Don't worry' while **Ellie E** found some in-school positives with her honest account:

*I mean being stuck in school isn't actually what I planned as it is very boring, but I'd rather be here and being able to talk to friends while I am doing the work, than be stuck in bed watching TV all day, though I'm pretty sure that's the life most people are living right now!*

All judges identified with this observation from **Kayden R** that 'when the big shops don't have what you want I just go down to the corner shop because they always have what you need for less money.'

And the prolific **Ameera K** brought us heartening thoughts in two further entries:

*Being a Sikh female is the most empowering feeling of all. I mean who wouldn't want to be a big kind cuddly bear with the heart of a warrior?*

*She's coming home, my beautiful kind warm little baby niece is coming home. She's changed my life forever in the best possible way.*

**Cadell CH** saw hope in Bristol's now world famous treatment of 'that' statue:

*In that moment everyone came together, even the police stood down, to show their support to their black friends, their black family, their black neighbours, the black community.*

For **Mia G**, 'Everyone has got each other to get through this and everyone just needs to keep friends, family and themselves safe!'

Looking ahead with another positive lens, **Krystian P** saw, 'only the beginnings of an even larger change, a change for the better. Equality will begin to rise more and more as time goes on and people learn to understand others. The world will become a better place. We do not know how long, maybe weeks, maybe years but we will provide support and equality to everyone.'

And then there were so many other entries which defied the negative/ positive categorisation. **Rosie B's** 'mysterious and unexplained, yet evocative' writing [according to Mr.Parham] is a good example:

*In the stormy, unilluminated sky the shimmering moon tried its hardest to not be blown away by the dark and twisted, evil clouds covering it. The moon has an army though, they are always watching everything always above you, always unseeable at day, unmistakably there at night. They are pearlescent eyes that burn quietly next to the moon before your eyes, they are the stars. Beneath the stars, is a field so thick with fog it looked like a field full of wondering ghosts.*

**Iona EJ** took us to Hungary and introduced a stunning 'roof-wise' childhood delivered in what Mr.Gill described as 'a wonderfully authentic voice':

*Looking back at my life in Hungary, I remember a handful of kids on the rooftops, including me and my much older brother Zak. He would tell me to buzz off or go and play hopscotch in the street below - but I never listened. Instead, I became the most roof-wise child in the whole city. Just to prove I could, I'd jump the gaps between the houses, scale a lamppost and climb down a pillar at the train station. I was by far the youngest, only five. But I showed them that I could do it just as well as them. They accepted me.*

*This reality was more clear in my mind than the messy, cluttered, small apartment that we lived in. It had a mini skylight that let a single shaft of light into the attic, which was piled high with boxes. Like we were going somewhere or never meant to stay as long as we did. When it rained Mum, Zak and I would curl up on the sofa with a cup of hot chocolate and play a family board game. Those days were care-free, school-free - the city was our playground. Not the type of playground where rich mothers take their toddlers and tell them off for getting rust on their frocks or mud on their shoes. No, it was the real world with blocked up gutters, angry shopkeepers, scabby knees, cut feet and torn shirts. I loved it!*

\*

*It was a bright frosty morning. I was hoping to get out early with Zak and go into town on the back of a truck that was willing to take two kids. But Mum and Zak both had other ideas. I remember this day so vividly, it could have been yesterday. I was sitting on the kitchen counter trying to reach the Snickers bar on the top shelf but failing and no one seemed to notice that I was struggling. Zak was in his best and only suit.*

*“I’ll miss you Jade,” is what he said to me, but I didn’t know what he was talking about. He was only going to a job interview, he’d be back for dinner. But Mum was crying and I was so confused that I started to ask what was going on. In my half sleep, half confusion I clung to Zak’s leg. Mum never cried, so this job interview must be really dangerous. Either that or Mum just didn’t want him to go. In the end, he sat me on his knee and pulled out of his pocket a watch that I knew all too well. It had been his when he was my age.*

*“But I can’t read the time,” I’d said and he laughed, that deep teenage laugh that you only get when you’re sixteen.*

*“No, it’s to remember me by,” he said looking at mum with that gaze older people give each other like they’re having a private conversation in their minds.*

*“But it’s just an interview, you’ll be back for dinner, that’s what Mum says.”*

*I felt the tears rolling down my cheeks, that was when it hit me, he wasn’t coming home for dinner. He wasn’t coming back home at all. So I took the watch, knowing I’d need it one day.*

*When Mum and I finally stopped trying to persuade him to stay, Zak picked up his suitcase, walked down the flat stairs, opened the front door and stepped into the old street. With me not knowing what lay ahead of him I felt proud, that for once in his life he broke away from the crowd and his friends to do his own thing.*

*Going back into the apartment it felt empty with none of his socks and holey sweaters bumped over a chair or stuffed down the back of the sofa. I’d miss his cheese and ham sandwiches as well.*

*We had had lunch and were just about to play a game of cards when a knock came at the door, without thinking I ran over to open it because in my five year old mind it was Zak who came to say he wanted to live with us his whole life and would never threaten to leave again. Before Mum could stop me, I had the door open and was staring at a man much older than Zak and with a moustache that looked like a letterbox on his top lip. In a steel bluey/grey uniform with a red patch on his arm and a white spider sewn on to it. I recognized him immediately and he was a policeman. I’d been chased by them plenty of times but they weren’t Hungarian. According to my eavesdropping they were from Germany and we didn’t like them. So as hastily as I opened the door I shut it right in his face.*

**Harry S** gave us ‘pyroclasm’ in his entry, which is also the opening of the novel he is working on:

*Long ago, there was a foretold legend, known as the Elemental Gauntlet. No, this isn’t a knockoff off the Infinity Gauntlet, that’s a different universe. The*

*Elemental Gauntlet holds absolutely substantial power within its knuckles and... thumb joint.*

*Create and extinguish pyroclastic flows! Enrage the lightning to your dreams! Command almost entire planets to your will! Send us back to the ice age and flood the world! It sounded made up, too good to be true. It was; an evil Scourge of the universe killed those who did triumph in their goal.*

**Charley H** combined what Mr.Gill described as ‘natural wit’ with disturbing alarm in, as Mr.Parham put it, a ‘delicious piece of YA literature’:

*A horrible tweed hat was balanced precariously on Mr Gurdess’ head for the majority of the lesson and his scholarly suit and tie clashed badly with it. No-one was quite sure why Mr Gurdess was wearing a tweed hat. He had a dismal fashion sense, however, which could have been why.*

*Archie’s friend, Milo had asked him, “What’s that on his head?”*

*“It’s called desperation,” Archie had replied, with a shake of his head.*

*After what seemed like an endless downpour of misery, the bell rang, and Archie was finally set free. As he ambled home, he let the warmth of the sun warm his face and eliminate any stray raindrops that could have ruined his evening. The joyous thought of dinner and video games from the comfort of his own warm bed nudged his cheek like a tiny, warm animal. Only a minute after leaving his friends at the end of his road, he developed a strange feeling in his tummy. Something wasn’t quite right. Was it that the trees were slightly wonky? Was a storm brewing? Whatever it was, it was messing with his vision and he didn’t like it one bit. By the time he had reached the front door, Archie had completely forgotten about his brief uncertainty and the rest of the afternoon went smoothly. He went to bed after sneakily stealing a biscuit and fell asleep within minutes of his head hitting the pillow.*

\*

*With a jolt Archie woke up. There was something in his ear. With an uncooperative finger, he poked himself in the eye, and then succeeded in reaching the offending object after three more tries. It was a small pellet of fossilised poo. Poo? He thought to himself, what kind of sick joke is this? Wishing that he had never stuck his finger in his ear in the first place, Archie pushed himself up on one elbow and a cascade of sand fell from his hair. It was only when his eyes adjusted to the*



*glaring rays of the sun that he realised that he was no longer in the safety of his bedroom.*

*In fact, he wasn't even in the twenty first century.*

*All around him was a desolate no-man's land, populated by the skeletons of various creatures. Scattered bodies lay around in various stages of decomposition. Next to him lay what used to be a bird. It was now mostly bones, the flesh having been eaten away by the days. The hot air didn't improve the smell of it. Cockroaches scuttled around, nibbling on the remains of assorted dead matter and, well, looking as pleased as a cockroach could look with their endless supply of meals. A house he recognised as his own, only by the vividly painted front door was looking vaguely intact, considering the fact that it had stood on its own for centuries on end. The chimney pot had fallen off and the remnants of a mummified cheese sandwich lay in what was once the front garden.*

*Scratching his head, Archie thought, this must have been what was messing with my vision earlier on. I seem to have travelled forward in time. Wanting some answers, he got up and began to look around. Finding that his legs were stubbornly refusing to walk, he resorted to crawling across the desert on his hands and knees.*

*The journey was only a ten metres but it felt like an eternity of knee-shredding, sweat-inducing torture. The sand was hiding sharp rocks and shattered glass which made progress slow and painful. It was like being on a treadmill; there was no end. Knee, hand, knee, hand and so on. Archie's forehead was dripping with sweat and the sun burned the back of his neck but he had to see what was at the top of the hill...*

*If he didn't, he would suffocate in the hot, airless atmosphere without seeing if the nightmare he seemed to have entered was real or imaginary. The brow of the hill was getting steadily closer but the air was denser and muggier as he climbed. Archie was a couple of feet away now but for all he knew, he could have been climbing Mount Everest. He could see the prayer flags in the distance, the thin ridge which less than 5000 people had climbed along. At last, he reached the true summit, twenty nine thousand feet in the air- or in Archie's case, about twenty nine feet.*

*When his legs regained enough strength, Archie stood up, gasping. What he saw astonished him beyond belief. There was nothing left except the empty shells of buildings and parched, reddish-brown soil suffocating the barren wasteland. He had hoped to see something a little more reassuring but he knew he was grasping at straws. Maybe he was hoping to see Miss Prophet at her desk, snoring away in the dust. Perhaps the suffocating air was, in fact, the scent of the lentil curry which Mr Gurdess had eaten the previous night. Unfortunately, after a desperate look around, Archie had to accept the inevitable truth.*

*He was the last boy on Earth.*

Keeping the reader in school, **Suki C's** clever writing found unsettling humour and provided what Mr.Parham considered 'a lovely twist':

*Maths was over all too quickly. Benny trudged to history wondering whether it would be learning about how Romans used the loo or what lived with cave people - in his opinion nothing other than RS could be worse than history with Mr Richards.*

*History finally done, thought Benny as the end of lesson bell rang. Only minutes later did he find himself sat in class. The bell rang. Mr Richards began, "In 1994..."*

*Benny had a strange sensation that he'd done this lesson before! Was someone toying with his mind? Was this the work of an alien lifeform?*

**Joshua E** conjured up another very realistic school situation:

*Richard was grumpy because yesterday the most stupid boy at school beat him at a maths equation by guessing the answer and humiliated Richard in front of the whole class. Richard swore to get his revenge.*

**Kacper M**, on the other hand, went into the streets to follow a bunch of young zombies:

*The streets were all gloomy and really creepy. We were very careful and followed them to the gaming store. We pretended we were zombies and just got past. It was quite risky and dangerous but totally worth, as we were able to get 4 different games for free! We made a run for our lives as they chased us. Suddenly a group of armed soldiers arrived with the antidote. They helped us to get to the safe zone and started to spray the zombies with a pink gas. We witnessed zombies turning into humans again. It was the weirdest thing we have ever seen.*

**Menal S** echoed, in her entry, the familiar struggle of a government scientist:

*During the first few weeks of lockdown, I tried to find the cause of the virus and let me tell you, it was a mess of conspiracy theories – from aliens to Bill Gates, some seemed rather plausible but there was not much proof to back them up.*

With this standard of writing – so personal and often just brilliant - we found it very difficult to award the prizes which now include (big thanks to our MP Kerry McCarthy!) a trip to London for a tour of the Houses of Parliament, just as soon as that can safely be arranged.

Most entries came from the Key Stage 3 category, making that much the more competitive field and we are very grateful to The Last Bookshop, Park Street for their donation of two beautiful hardbacks ('The Last Outlaws' by Charlotte Gordon and George Orwell's diaries).

These are awarded to **Iona EJ** and **Charley H** for their great entries which just miss out on the formal awards.

Quality over quantity gives **Eli T** 3<sup>rd</sup> prize (worth £20) with this 'pithy and terse' [according to Mr.Parham] piece:

*One day, replacing the beautiful, Arctic glaciers will be towering sand dunes.  
We will all be gone, the animals and all we fought for.*

**Brandon J** has written his way to the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize (worth £30) with some awesome word power in a piece which Dr.Langdon felt should be performed and in which Mr.Parham found themes 'popping up like icebergs.' Mr.Jennings found the entry 'was really powerful and gave a strong insight into how the writer feels.'

### *Parentless White Sheep*

*Lowie, well he's kinda like the **Shepherd***

*Living in a jungle full of black sheeps kinda makes me feel like I'm the **leopard***

*But I'm not really not trying to **intrude** or to be **rude** and I definitely don't see them as **food***

*but it's just my current **mood**.*

*Speaking of **food**, it's kind of different not really what I'm **used** to like chicken jerk goat curry and chicken brown **stew**.*

*One of the sheep is very **motherly** but not the **motherly** type that is all **lovely** and **jubbly** and definitely not that is all **cuddly**.*

***But** she cares for **me**.*

*But it's just the expectations that has for **me** are so far out of reach you **see**.*

*But I get it she's older than **me** bigger than **me** smatter than **me**.*

But I can't seem to **see** why we can't live under the same roof **happily** in peace and **harmony** and most importantly **equally** because after all big elephants can add up sums **easily**.

So, there's a crafty sheep, one who hopes to get the worst of me, occasionally brings out the worst in me but I have to admit he's funnier than me but, in the house, we live in he isn't as unique as me because at the end of the day...

I'm the white sheep you see.

And you know what? Maybe that's my responsibility - to add diversity.

Because at the end of the day big elephants can add up sums easily

And there is only two of them and one of me.

But at the end of the day we are all still a family and therefore have to stick together in order to make peace and Harmony.

Speaking of harmony, back on the topic of Lowie, oh how he's so friendly but he might look deadly because of his enormous belly that kinda looks like jelly. When I wonder how can someone look so deadly but still be so cuddly and friendly my mind turns to confetti.

Believe me man, his belly is so crazy.

Lastly there is the border collie and from his hand to his toes to his knees he brings out the best of me and he is faster than me even with one achillie.

"Oh a rugby injury," he tells me.

He's like a smaller Lowie but with a smaller sized belly but nevertheless he's a g!

I've told him that already.

So, if a home exchange was verge of being arranged and therefore things may not be the same, at least I know during my time - one sheep kept me entrained whilst another always kept me on the right lane and of course can't forget the Shepherd that is always there to help when I complained.

But I'm getting older and I'm starting to find old stuff a bit more lame but don't be offended. You're not to blame because at the end of the day it's part of life for it for everything to all change.

But it is for **Natasha S** to take the Key Stage 3 1<sup>st</sup> prize (worth £50) for what all the judges praised as a story sophisticated in narrative and dialogue and beautifully told from the point of view of a much older person. Her intelligent and empathetic tale can be read in full at the end of this document.

At Key Stage 4, **Madie R** comes 3<sup>rd</sup> with her excellent diary-style narrative:

*It was an average Monday morning in the wet and awful weather of Britain. I was in the car, on the way to another day of secondary school. Year 10 has been one of the most boring years so far, but I guess that's just what happens when you get closer to your exams...*

*There had been a lot of worry on the news about a virus that started in China in late January so parents had begun to keep their children off school and honestly it all started so fast from this Monday...*

*My initial thoughts were that we would only be in lockdown for three weeks like Boris had said but, boy, was I wrong.*

*It turns out that school did decide to close their gates, every student was unsure when we would go back and some were excited but some weren't. I was definitely in the 'not excited' category.*

*Weeks, turned into months and it was all a blur. Everyday felt exactly the same. We were all adjusting to the new norm. Whatever that may be.*

*Although it has been a rough time it has also taught me a lot about myself that I was unaware before, for example I am a lot more resilient than I thought I was. It has also given me the opportunity to learn new skills, like learning the piano and expanding my knowledge by reading more books.*

**Yasmin M** takes 2<sup>nd</sup> prize with another powerfully personal account of lockdown:

*When I was 8 years old my older brother had a zombie game and, although I wasn't meant to watch, I caught a few glances. I was so scared I couldn't sleep properly for weeks and I resorted to putting shoes under my bed against the possibility of their being a zombie apocalypse.*

*Around the same time the Ebola outbreak happened. I was terrified, we were all going to die and I'd be left just like the girl in the game. However after a few*

*months Ebola never properly came to the UK I was ok because unlike in the movies things like this never happened in real life.*

*Seven years later there was news of a virus in China ...*

*It would be fine. It had to be fine. Truly I've never really dealt well with disease. With past experience it always meant death, it always meant losing someone. Now with the whole world fighting off this plague I was stressed to say the least. Everyone was panicking as it took over the world one country at a time. Precautions were being put in place to try and preserve the lives of all those affected; scientists were working hard to find a cure. It felt as if no one knew what was going on. Not my parents. Not the doctors. Not the government. Not the world leaders. No one.*

*Once the prime minister spoke and schools were closed I realised that it was in fact serious. I realised that **everything had changed**. Life as we knew it would never be the same.*

But the unanimously-voted winner in this Key Stage 4 category is **Khanh P** with what Dr.Langdon dubbed a 'raw and powerful poem – experimental in form and structure':

### **A Turn for the Worse...**

Every time I think about going outside; my heart beats faster,  
Every time I think about going outside; my hands starts to shake,  
Every time I think about going outside; my palms starts to sweat,  
Every time I think about going outside; there are tears in my eyes,  
A turn for the worse for my mental health.

And do you wanna know why?  
The painful truth.  
Well I'll tell you why:

Because people are racist.  
I'm Vietnamese yet I'm considered Chinese,  
We are similar but not the same.  
I came here for opportunities,  
Thought this country has more equality,

Yet why don't you ask Dominic Raab?

I'm gonna say something about one experience in lockdown,  
I decided to go on a fishing trip with my family,  
I didn't realise that my race was so interesting: I felt their razor-sharp eyes.  
A woman with a young child did a 180 just because she saw me and my family,  
Death glares all around me.

All that only made me feel embarrassment,  
Is that what I'm supposed to feel now?  
Embarrassed of who I am and where I came from.  
My experiences of xenophobia really have made me lose my identity...  
bit...

by...

bit...

It saddens me I have to hide my identity,  
My culture is a massive part of me,  
I have to now wear sunglasses to hide my eyes and a hat to cover my hair,  
The extent I go just for people not to glare.

It breaks me to know that I might get stabbed,  
It must be my imagination going wild?  
Unfortunately, if you just look at the news,  
These thoughts are becoming the reality: the truths.

It destroys me that I'm an outcast in this great country  
This tragedy is ripping me apart,  
The stress of school is catching up to me,  
I feel so alone. I'm a minority.

Every time I think about going outside; my heart beats faster,  
Every time I think about going outside; my hands starts to shake,  
Every time I think about going outside; my palms starts to sweat,  
Every time I think about going outside; there are tears in my eyes,  
It really is a turn for the worse for my mental health.

The Key Stage 3 winning entry in full:

### **'Old Habits Die Hard'**

**A short story by Natasha S**

I looked up from the tea that had just boiled, as my two grandchildren came running into the kitchen.

“May, can you please shut the door,” I said to the youngest as she nearly slammed into her sister who had abruptly stopped by the sink.

“Ok Grandma.”

Then there was the reluctant sound of her turning and lifting the latch. I drank some of my tea. It was still too hot and my tongue went numb and fuzzy.

“Grandma? Why do you always want the doors to be closed?” May’s blonde head bobbed up as she took a place at the table, her eyes watching, waiting for the answer.

“It’s funny as when I was a child, I asked the same question to my Grandma,” I said, smiling as a faint memory rose.

I opened the old door; the latch was always so weird, and I could never do it properly. The kitchen was full of the smells of breakfast. Honey, cinnamon, yoghurt. That was the best thing. Yoghurt and fruit! We never had it at home so when we were at Oma and Opa’s I would always make the most of it. I closed the door behind me, but it didn’t shut. No door that old would just shut, you had to man-handle it and force the latch down. I never bothered. But Oma always did. I wondered why?

I tentatively spoke. “Oma? Why do you always want the doors to be closed?”

“Well, it’s an old person thing. I don’t want the smells of the kitchen mixing with the smells of the lounge.”

Her voice faded away to a place in the back of my brain that I could never reach at this age. May and Florence were staring at me with a slight worried expression.

“Sorry girls, I was just remembering when I asked that question to my Grandma. If I am your Grandma, then that would make her your great-great-grandma.”

“Was that the one that was Dutch?” Florence asked.

“Yes, it was. My Oma and Opa meaning my Grandma and Grandad. To answer your question, May, I want the door to be closed as, well, it’s quite an old person thing. I don’t want the smells of the kitchen mixing with the smells of the lounge.” I



echoed my Oma's words and smiled as I saw the same expression that was on my face around 70 years ago.

Florence was still at the sink and was frowning at a sign that was by the soap. It said 'Stop Coronavirus! Wash your hands.' I smiled as I knew the question that was forming in her mouth.

"Why does the sign say 'Coronavirus'?" The word sounded strange and foreign when spoken by someone who hadn't lived through it.

"That is a long story. Why don't we move to the sofa and grab some biscuits? ... Well, it started in January, I mean people knew of the Coronavirus, but everyone was overreacting, and our teachers were saying it was like the flu. It was funny, every time someone coughed someone would say 'Corona!' That was sort of the nickname, in my eyes. Actually, I can't remember when it started getting serious; I remember when our teacher showed us a map with all the deaths, the infected and the survived, it looked very positive, not many deaths and a lot had survived and it hadn't reached the UK yet.

"Maybe it was when Italy started getting very infected, posters went up in school saying to wash your hands. I was a bit irritated because so many people were in the bathrooms washing hands and I thought they should have been doing that before. Why did we start caring about hygiene just because there's a virus? Though washing hands was an important thing to do to help stop the spread."

Florence looked at me with a new curiosity in her eyes. "Wait, were you one of the COVID19 generation?"

I chuckled. "Yes I am. Does that make me sound really old?"

Florence blushed and hurriedly replied, "No! Just next term we are learning about the Coronavirus and what it was like for people in lockdown and what the restrictions were. That's why I was so confused when I saw the sign by your sink."

"Oh, that's interesting. I was wondering if they would teach it in school at some point. I was a child at the time, if that make me seem less old! Where was I? Oh, I can't remember."

May piped up. I didn't think she was listening. "You were saying about people washing their hands."

"Ah, thank you, May. Well, we carried on. My parents, mainly my Dad was monitoring the news and figures and he had watched some video and thought we would be off school in the Easter holiday time. Some teachers were saying that our Easter break would be a bit longer than usual and then we would go back to school after. It was very exciting, this big new thing. I didn't think it affected people in the UK at that point. After speaking to my other Grandma in June I realised that people were changing their lives way before I thought. She was self-isolating on the 1<sup>st</sup> March."

Florence looked shocked so I paused and waited for the question I could see she was trying to devise.

“Why was she self-isolating? Was she ill?”

“No, not at all. She was staying in a hotel and when they left, they got a call that someone had been tested positive for it, so they had to self-isolate. 1<sup>st</sup> March was when they started and I remember what I did that day so wanted to compare. It was one of my highlights that year. I went out with my friend and shopped and ate in cafes. I don’t think I thought about the Coronavirus that day apart from when I saw someone wearing a mask. It was always weird to think when I was doing that my Grandma, only up in Scotland, was staying in her house and shopping online. We started self -isolating 3 weeks before Easter about two weeks after my Grandma.”

May’s voice floated through my thoughts drawing my attention back. “What was it like not being at school when your friends were?”

“It was very strange. Everything was suddenly different. My life had changed dramatically. Not to mention I was doing it before the school had got used to it, so my lessons weren’t as structured. The teachers were very helpful at guiding me through the oddity though. Despite all the difference, I quite liked it. I made everything, routines, schedules, timetables. I had more freedom in my day, which I enjoyed immensely.”

Florence looked amazed. “You organized your own work? You kept to a schedule?”

“Yes. I was a very organized child, so it wasn’t too bad. Looking at the news and talking to my friends, made me realise that I was very lucky; my family were all safe and I wasn’t struggling with work or an illness that made me more at risk so I tried to make the most of this new experience. Do not get me wrong, I got distracted just as much, I could just timetable catch-up sessions!”

Florence looked at me with admiration and shook her head. “I could never. I am terrible at concentrating at home.”

“It takes time. Believe it or not, this is another thing that you have to learn and practice. The lockdown experience was just time where I had to exercise that skill. My work counted on it,” I said, lining my words with encouragement.

“It had been a week and then school closed itself! We got sent loads of work and had to complete it. Overall, it was kind of fun. Instead of getting up to walk to school I could stay in bed and read or do some morning exercises. I was used to it already so had already experienced the change my friends were starting to go through. I wanted to make room for things that I enjoyed; one of the main things I loved about lockdown – I had time. That was when I started the Lunar Chronicles, the ones I gave to you, Florence.”

“Oh yes. I absolutely love them. I think Kai is my favourite character. I’m on book two.”

“That’s lovely to hear. I think I liked Scarlet and Iko.”

May looked up. “Can we carry on please? I want to hear the rest of the story.”

“Yes, sorry, let me just put the pizzas on.” I walked up the steps and lifted the latch of the kitchen door. Florence and May’s squeals echoed through to the kitchen as I put the pizzas into the oven.

“Right” I said as I plumped up the cushions and settled myself back onto the sofa. “I think we carried on through till September, doing work online and having nice weekends that I wished lasted forever. I saw my best friend a lot. We saw her perform last year, remember?”

May jumped up and started doing twirls and spins as if she was in a ballet performance herself.

“Yes, very good, May! You know I bet we could get you in for lessons.”

May’s face shot into a smile and blushed cheeks as she jumped and pranced around the room even more.

“I will take that as a yes then! Now come on, let me tell you the rest. I remember June very well as I started keeping a diary, one of the new things I was trying. Doing school at home was ok. It was very easy to get distracted by going on my phone though. There were a few birthdays in June, so I went to parties in parks. I was also thinking about my birthday as well, what I was going to do, especially if we had to social distance. I think I hoped for some miracle to lift it all by September, but the truth was no one really knew what September would look like.”

May was staring into the distance.

“Are you alright, May?” My voice was starting to sound a bit hoarse from the talking.

May looked round, a blank expression on her face. It suddenly cleared, and she said, “Oh yes, I was just thinking about what my birthday would be like in a lockdown.”

“Yes, it would be a bit different to your normal one I’m sure. In September you were only allowed eight people at a one metre distance. It was still fun - we just sat outside and talked but it was a change.”

Florence was pulling on a thread on her sleeve. “You said you started writing a diary in June. That was around the time George Floyd died right?”

“Yes, you learnt about that last term? That was despicable and it was very hard to do the right thing, not marching, marching. There were a lot of articles and videos and it was quite overwhelming. I think I went to a park near me that had a smaller gathering but it didn’t happen or the dates got all confused. I donated some money to a fund that his sister Bridget had set up and I listened to a podcast that talked about it. I think everyone was just trying to help and do it right but there wasn’t just one right choice, it was a lesson that had to take time. Though it was really good to see that action was happening. Statues were taken down and buildings and street names were in the process of changing. A year later, on the 25<sup>th</sup> May people started a two-minute silence. It still happens now. Did your school do it?”

May looked at Florence and Florence nodded, “Remember, May, a couple weeks ago when we had to be silent for a bit?”

May’s face cleared and she nodded as well.

“You’ve got to remember to talk about it with people. Even if you feel uncomfortable, try to have an open mind and don’t become defensive.” I knew their school and their parents had talked about racism with them but the more they talked about it the better. I smiled as both the girls nodded definitely.

Florence spoke up. “One of the questions our teacher said we would be looking at was, how did people feel about going back to work and/or school?”

“When I thought of school, I was getting more excited to go back, but then scared as well. Butterflies would appear in my stomach as I knew it would be a different experience and I wasn’t sure if I would like it or not. I think over lockdown everyone felt just every emotion. It was a big roller-coaster. I had days that were great, I had average days and then I had days when I was just sad. It was so helpful to talk to friends and facetime as you saw that everyone was like that.”

Florence’s head turned sharply. “I think I can smell burning.”

“Oh, thank you Florence. Let’s go have a look and we can get drinks ready as well. Tell me, do you both like pink lemonade?” I stood up, shaking my numb legs and slowly moved into the kitchen. We got everything ready for dinner and then went back to the lounge as the girls wanted to hear the rest of the story, so I thought, why not get comfy.

We talked into the late evening, about what school was like when I got back. How it was so fun but very weird; we all had to social distance, so classes were separated, and it was a bit like going to college – coming in at different times and having fewer lessons. Catching up was really hard work. Me and my friends did study sessions together. It then got more relaxed and started phasing out. Two years later someone found a cure and it just went back to normal. Just like that. Well, after everyone had the jabs.

Florence’s face twisted into triumph and fear. “Oh those must be the jabs we are getting next week. It’s called COV. I’m rather nervous. Do they hurt?”

I smiled comfortingly. “Don’t worry at all, they are just the same as ones you’ve had before but for a different illness.”

She nodded but gripped the blanket tighter.

“Life after COVID was very different. I had become accustomed to walking far apart and not going out to town or just everyone being a bit on edge. It was great though. Me and my friend had made a list of things to do after lockdown and we got through them over the time. Now I have this great story as well and my independent studying improved, which helped for college and university. I think everyone also gained more confidence in themselves as they were with themselves more than with other people. Oh, May, you need to get to bed, you’re yawning.”

“What? No! Please I want to hear the end...” May shook her head vigorously in an attempt to keep her eyes from shutting.

“Ok, I will make you some hot milk and once you’ve drunk it, then you can go up.”

May nodded slightly before wriggling back under the blankets.

“Grandma, can I have some herbal tea?” Florence called from the sofa.

“Yes, dear, just putting the kettle on now.” I soon brought out three cups of hot beverages. Warm milk for May, chamomile tea for Florence, and one for me too.

“Now, the last bit of the story. There isn’t much to it, people just went on with their lives I guess. We moved to France for a bit and once I had finished university I moved back here. I moved in with your Auntie Jane and people rarely talked about lockdown. You can find videos on YouTube though; people talking about ‘what I did in lockdown’, celebrities having interviews, though you wouldn’t know any of them. However, I think about it a bit. It was a big thing for me, and I think it helped me a lot. I have a couple of diaries and notebooks upstairs from it, so if you need any information about it next term, Florence, you can have a look at those. Now, though, you both have got to get to bed otherwise your parents will have a fit if you are not up at nine tomorrow!”

I kissed them good night and watched them as they unwrapped themselves from the blankets and slowly and drowsily got up to bed, moaning as they went. I folded the blankets away and straightened the cushions.

I then went and washed my hands for twenty seconds making sure to do the thumbs and the nails. I turned the tap off and glanced at the sign. ‘Stop Coronavirus! Wash your hands.’ I smiled; old habits die hard. And finally, I went up to bed, reliving lockdown in my dreams.

The End

The **Community Development Group** would like to thank the judges (Dr. Langdon, Mr. Parham, Mr. Gill, Ms. Dalton, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Andrews and Mr. Widdecombe) for their perceptive (and sometimes astonished) comments. As one judge put it, ‘There’s some lines in here which made my heart melt.’

But the biggest thanks goes to all those students (and parents) who submitted entries – and those who helped them by sharing keyboards, hearing drafts and, in many cases, offering creative advice.

We heard several times that our writers particularly enjoyed the freedom of this competition during which they had - unusually for a school thing! - *lots of time* to build and express their ideas. This was the writing process at its very best.

Whatever next summer looks like, the CDG hopes this will become an annual celebration of BMA's words.

Start planning!

Mr. Swallow

July 2020