

Winner

Foxes

Did you know that there are more foxes in the world today than there were in medieval times? But they can be so shy, it's practically impossible to catch a glimpse of them. This is how I got to know the foxes in my neighbourhood.

It was another boring day, trying to find something to do during the coronavirus pandemic. I had decided to fill the afternoon with litter picking along the path next to my school. Unexpectedly, I saw the caretaker, Robert, doing the same thing in the school playground. We got talking about wildlife and then he said he had suspicions that there might be a fox in the school grounds. I felt so intrigued and excited because I had a camera trap which I hadn't caught a fox on it yet. Maybe this was my opportunity? I asked if some time I could put up my camera trap near the location he had seen the foxes. Robert agreed heartily, as he wanted to investigate about the fox.

A few days later, in the morning, I strode off to school to put it up in the playground. Robert was there and he disclosed to us the secret corner of the playground where he had seen the fox previously. I strapped the camera on to a wire fence because it was pointing at the position that Robert had spied the fox. I knew this would be a likely place to see the fox, not just because Robert had seen it but also because I was sure this was a safe enough corner for a fox to dig their den.

The next morning, I awoke feeling excited, foreseeing bushy red tails with gorgeous blached tips and cute little pointed faces. But had my camera actually managed to capture the fox? Again, I set off on the familiar journey and arrived at the playground. I charged towards the camera trap. Breathlessly, I picked it up and opened it, quickly pressing the buttons that would reveal to me the pictures within. I was not disappointed. Inside were incredible pictures of a beautiful vixen with three adorable cubs! This seemed like an average sized litter, as vixens normally have between two and five babies in one litter. The photographs revealed that the cubs had been rolling over each other and playing in the broad daylight! I realised that this playfighting wasn't just for fun, it had serious purpose. They needed to practice these skills for when they were adults and needed to hunt for themselves. But I knew that if you see foxes, you should admire them from a distance but not upset them or they might leave. I was so pleased to see the wildlife in my local area, and it is important that wildlife everywhere is protected.

David Neki (9)
King Athelstan Primary School

Editors note : please see accompanying fox photos on the photo competition page

Runner-up

Lockdown 3.0

Press briefings at 5 but late so end up being more like 6,
Confusion over the ethics of politics.
Learn another mantra to add to the mix,
Taking 'unprecedented actions' as we have a virus to fix.

Stay at home
Protect the NHS
Save Lives

Staring out the window, waiting for some effect -
Only for the day to bleed into the next and next.
School work and thoughts do make me vexed
But yet I still keep in contact with friends through text.

Distance learning overshadowed by technical difficulties
Nothing compared to the heroes in the NHS and vaccine clinical teams.
Separate in our homes yet united through our experience
But yet I too feel plagued by this weariness.

Drama lessons moved online too,
Through the screen we try to act, shouting we can't hear you
Unmute yourself, put your camera on for a view.
Yet nothing compares to acting in person and doing a real run through.

Repeat the mantra:
Stay at home
Protect the NHS
Save lives.
Yet feel confused when the message changes:
Hands, face, space.

Anger over our high death rate, why is it so?
When others have managed to keep it so low.

I hope and hope for a plateau
And a deep decline in this woe.

Yet remember:
Hands
Face
Space

Yet not all is negative in Lockdown 3.0,
The inauguration of Kamala and President Joe
Brought hope to the world of democracy and so
The first female, first black VP and we can't wait to see her
grow.

Though lockdown is tough, it is necessary
Together we fight to beat this adversary,
This silent stalking enemy
For which we hope to find a remedy.

I am not here to criticise the government,
I am not here to criticise the **mis**government,
I am not here to criticise our situation,
I am not here because I am an aberration.

I repeat the mantra -
Stay at home
Protect the NHS
Save lives.

I am just here to tell my experience,
I am just here as a symbol of resilience,
No matter what happens I will not be furious
For we must stay together to be victorious.

Mariam Nossair (17)
The Kingston Academy

CARA Literary Competition entries

Ode to Homework

Shall I compare thee to a waste of time?
Though that would be hard to rhyme.
But I still must hand it in on time,
for if not there shall be punishment for the crime!

And what punishment shall it be?
A dreaded 'L1' is what I foresee.
And even if I try to hide up a tree,
kept back after school is where I'll be.

So now I slog away in my room,
as my lovely weekend turns to gloom.
Times goes by, I've lost the afternoon,
while my pen scratches a mournful tune!

Monday morning feels like doom,
why can't we go back to lessons on Zoom?

Alexander Lewis (12)
The Kingston Academy

Life Under Lockdown

Everyday I wake up it's back to online school,
Lots and lots of homework because that's the rule.
No seeing my friends, it's always online chat,
And it could all be thanks to a bat.
Lockdown life is certainly not fun,
The only time I go outside is for a run.

Henna Jasmine Walker (10)
Latchmere School

I stayed at home,
I saw not a single soul,
All my friends had gone,
Leaving me sorrowful,

Everything was bleak,
With not a single treat,
There was no bright side,
So I sat down and cried.

Daniel Raihan Walker (12)
The Kingston Academy

Shattered

We are alone, together
You & me
At first
I didn't realise that though
I kept talking to you
or what other call, myself
I see you in the mirror
or when I look out through the window
or into a screen
You keep telling me all these lies
and some truths
How do I know what to believe
There is no one else to assure me
No one else can see my sorrow
because I have to cover them up with a mask
But I can't get rid of you either
Because me and you we can never be 6 feet apart

Sarah Car (16)
The Kingston Academy

Light the Fuse (My feelings about Richmond Park)

Shall I compare thee to a waste of time?
Richmond Park I hate you so,
to you my parents make me go.
For exercise, Christmas walks and lots of fresh air,
the more time I spend in you, the more I despair!

Because of you our council tax is dear,
why do you have to be so near?
For all the screen time you've made me loose,
I'll plant a bomb and light the fuse!

Alexander Lewis (12)
The Kingston Academy

A laden year

Press briefings at 5 but late so end up being more like 6,
We only glance at the clouds' nonchalant dance,
An undulating mass of gray in search of a prey
Congregating a blockade, enclosing a shade.

But the same day decays with a breathless pace,
Blurs your clear vision, catalyses an urgent race,
Buries men with no grace. A stagnant space.

Bold words float on nets of pixels on peaks
And gorges and plains, on those under weeks
Of mountains of mighty height, on cheeks,

Cheeks that perspire with glistening blues,
Luring loathes and curtaining clues
Of a hidden truth. Crowded cities whose

Crackling fires and sunken trenches and
Knifing pains that won't diffuse across the land
Don't rest at night. Evening prayers and grand

Official headlines bring pulses with no response,
Weave within the clouds' nonchalant dance.
No. Those drowned faces in blue and white

Refract an arch of a myriad of progressive
Colours, blast the old memory of a paper-like
Reality pauses over faceless creatures. Therefore,

Our vision aches as an acute branch strays
Blank and bare thrusting like a needle
Into the forlorn firmament until it pierces,

Pierces through the tearful arch, awakens you
And us, the mother of the marvels and
The laws. A green light, dispersing air

Filled with worthless crowns, touches
The eyes of souring silence, of those
Shrinking voice, blows the barriers

Away like gales flying papers and dusts of
An eternally short era of air that doesn't smear
But is transparent with railings and blocks

And a glass of an ignorant past.

Yuquan Zhou (15)
The Kingston Academy

We Longed To Escape

It's been hard to focus, pay attention, stay on tasks,
Was there really a time we didn't need to wear masks?

We stayed indoors and kept safe,
Even though we longed to escape.

We started the year full of hopes, dreams, and ambitions,
But we put them to hold, due to virus transmissions.

Students studied remotely from home,
And spoke through their microphone.

Traffic disappeared, there was no car in sight,
This went on, day and night.

But we have learnt through the journey we went,
The next year is going to be great, to all extent!

Now it's 2021! It's time to look ahead,
Unlike 2020, let's accomplish amazing things instead!

Jiya Brar (12)