

My Twist on a Tale:
Our Tomorrow

Winning Stories



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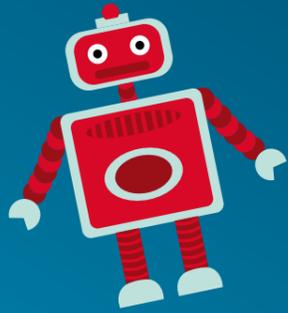
Following the huge success of our My Twist on a Tale: Everyday Heroes competition in 2020, My Twist on a Tale returned for its third year on International Literacy Day 2021 with a brand-new theme: Our Tomorrow.

After a truly unique few years we invited young storytellers to look to the future and unleash their creative fortune-telling skills. Children were able to explore whatever themes were important to them, thus enabling them to reflect their own personality, location and experiences in their narratives.

This book features 17 wonderful stories and poems from children across the United Kingdom. We offer our congratulations to them all for their fantastic work and for winning My Twist on a Tale 2021!

The beautiful illustrations in this book are by Liliana Perez, c/o Collaborate.

#MyTwistOnATale



“To infinity, and beyond!”
Buzz Lightyear

“What’s comin’ will come, an’
we’ll meet it when it does.”
Hagrid



“Even the smallest person can change
the course of the future.”
JRR Tolkien



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World Tragedy

by **Sebastian Dechamps**, KS1 Winner

Orion glanced up at the sky as the candy-apple-red parrots glided across the sky's path, singing their divine songs. Only in Homshomina will you see brown polar bears with green heads, so they can camouflage with the trees. Why are the polar bears no longer white? The ice caps have melted, and the polar bears have evolved to live in the forest. Orion sat on a whopping, shiny lapis rock, rocking his baby brother, Bobby, and singing 'Take Me Home, Country Roads'.

Meanwhile, in the Netherland, chaos controlled everybody's minds. The plague 1.112 reached all our homes. This monstrosity of a disease turns you invisible and you are likely to die within two weeks! Humans littered their country and now it looks like the inside of a colossal bin. This attracted the whiffy, grimy black rats. Thousands of black rats now lie in every house in the country!

The rats have fleas that have a bacteria. This bacteria gives you the plague 1.112. Watch out for the fleas! However, the people didn't know to watch out for them, so they killed the cats and dogs

instead. I'm sorry if you are a cat or dog lover, but that's just the way life goes.

Reuben was a 42-year-old accountant and he cherished his pet dog, Basil, so when he died, Reuben turned him into a cyborg. That meant he could live with him forever. He has a robotic eye to spy weapons and explosives. Reuben sadly died of the plague and had a miserable death. Basil was extremely glum and missed him very much.

Back in the emerald-green Sloth Forest, Orion was practising his archery on a tree. Twenty miles away, he could hear polar bears roaring loudly. He could feel a sloth's breath on the back of his neck. He turned around and patted the sloth on its head, then spun around and shot his arrow. It hit the target.

Dog City is southeast of Sloth Forest. Here, each family has their own kennel. They know which one is theirs because it has their family name on it. They get their food from the shops and use bone chips as coins. Dogs figured out how to make bones, so they don't have to kill animals.

In a lava-red kennel, there was a cloud-white labradoodle named Koochie. Koochie is Basil's second cousin. He heard about the plague 1.112 on the Doggy Broadcaster and was worried about Basil.

Back in the Netherland, Basil sent a message to Koochie saying, "My owner died and everyone I know is disappearing!"

Koochie sent an invitation to Basil saying, "If you are that miserable there, you can come and live with me."

Ten minutes later, Basil teleported to Dog City in Homshomina and searched around for a kennel with 'Boneas' (their family name) on it. He spotted the kennel and saw Koochie inside. Koochie showed Basil around Homshomina: Dog City, Bird Sky, Sloth River, The Bins, Face, Polar Bear Jungle, The Bath and Sloth Forest. Basil was amazed because there was lots of wildlife, no rubbish and no plague.

Basil recorded Sloth Forest (it was one of his cyborg abilities) and showed it to the people in his city. When the people saw the recording of Homshomina, they were flabbergasted! Once they saw it, the people of the Netherland copied Homshomina. Orion came to help them do this. They cleaned up their country

and looked after the wildlife. Eventually, the plague 1.112 disappeared and the Netherland became a healthy place again. People stopped getting sick and nobody disappeared again.

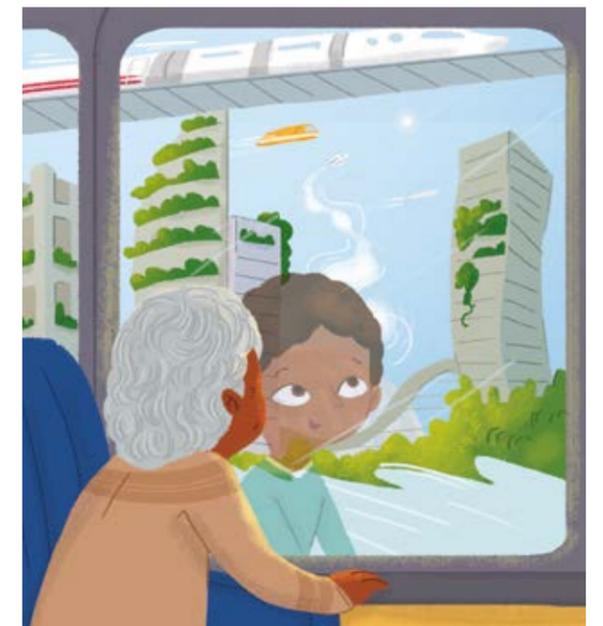


Into the Blue

by **Veer Khanna**, KS2 Winner, Somerhill School

The day after midnight, the year
twenty-one-thousand unfolds
How different the Earth looks from
years of old!
Countries united no more division
Connected by tunnels with great
precision
Come aboard and see the joyful
world citizens all together
Chattering, gossiping, laughing
without measure
Such a comfortable ride, some
simply sleep and rest
As the travelator speeds forward
from east to west
Little eight-year-old Veer wide-
eyed and amazed at the chunnel
Would marvel at this phenomenal
transportation funnel
Makes my hundred-year-old heart
chuckle and laugh
Twenty minutes from Dover to
Delhi, could he have dreamed of
something so fast?
And all of his school lessons
warning about fossil fuels and
plastic
How lucky we are that we didn't
look past it
Towns and cities vertical forests
and gardens in the sky

A haven for humans, animals and
creatures that fly
Plants and grasses engulfing
arching skyscrapers and pods
Ponds, rivers and wildlife, paradise
of the gods.
Earthing families zipping on
hoverboards having fun
Looping the loop and frolicking
until the day is done
No more chasing grey and man-
made dreams
Who knew living was this simple
and easy as it seems
And as for school trips, Veer,
forget the petting zoo
It's Jupiter, it's Neptune, far out,
out into the blue!



Romeo and Juliet: Space Edition

by **Nathaniel Reed**, KS3 Winner, Myddelton College

Once upon a time, there were two space stations, the M.O.N.T.A.G.U.E and the C.A.P.U.L.E.T. They had a space race to the far away planet of V3-N-1C3. Because of that, they absolutely hated each other, they would destroy each other but they had a rule to not shoot down their stations. Their rivalry went back 167 earth years.

Lights of all colours shot through the windows of the C.A.P.U.L.E.T station. Loud music was lost to the desolate vacuum of space. The melodies were left in the dark abyss.

"A birthday," Mercutio muttered. "Honestly, do they want us to shoot them down, disgusting." Romeo sighed; he had a plan, but he had to get Mercutio away from the window. He had been sitting there all day, staring at the flashing lights. He thought he was jealous. To hide his envy, he had been making points about how bad they were all day. To hide how lonely he felt out here.

"You should eat." Mercutio spun to face him. "You don't want to

starve just because of how much you hated a space station," Romeo said. "Maybe some tea as well." Mercutio shrugged and turned back to the window. Romeo sighed again and walked into the kitchen area to fetch a packet of food. Chicken and lime flavoured curry paste. *That'll do*, he thought. He walked back to the other room and set it down on the table. "There you go. Now eat." PLEASE.

"Okay!" Romeo dashed out the room and snuck into the hangar. He dived into pod 19 and flicked it on. He put on the headphones.

"INITIATING LAUNCH SEQUENCE!" He took a breath... It felt like he was falling down a hole before he hit the bottom as the engines kicked in. *Here I go*. He pulled back the throttle and shot forwards. The front of the pod was transparent, so he looked at his target. The docking area was underneath so he'd have to come up from below. He dropped the spaceship down and activated the P.I.N.G mechanism. It didn't stand for anything, just a great name for something that makes you go

forwards very quickly. He pulled back the controls and he started to travel upwards while still having P.I.N.G on. He switched it off as he slid to a halt. No alarms. That's a good start. He stepped out. Completely undetected. Perfect. He walked along a corridor and peered through a door. A girl was talking to someone that looked like an older version of herself. Her mother. He slipped closer and her mother said, "Okay then Juliet, I'll leave you then, make sure to join us once you're ready." She turned and started towards him. *Oh no*. He sprinted round the corner. *Please don't come this way!* To his relief, she carried on straight. *Juliet! Beautiful*. He couldn't get her face out his mind. He ran back to her door. And she walked out.

"Goodness, you made me jump, what are you doing 'round here?"

"Uhh...um...n..n.noth-im just... um...exploring the areas I haven't been before."

"I don't believe I've seen you before. You look very nice." She smiled.

"Why, thank you, so do you, lovely lady. Juliet, isn't it?"

"Yes, do you want to go to the party together?"

"Sure, but I'm a bit lost, I've never



been to this part before, please can you lead the way."

"Okay, follow me!"

This is great. But what have I done?! I came here to spy for information.

"Here we are," Juliet remarked. "But first, what's your name?"

"My name is--"

"INTRUDER ALERT, UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT LOCATED IN THE HOLD." Sirens boomed out the speakers and red lights flashed. Romeo put his hands on Juliet's shoulders and kissed her cheek.

"My name is Romeo, I'm from the M.O.N.T.A.G.U.E ship," he said hurriedly.

"But--" Romeo cut her off.

"It's fine, we can be together," he shouted and pushed through the crowd. He followed his path back to the hold and dived into his pod as the guards started to surround him. He turned the ship. *How am I ever going to get out of this one.* He slammed his hand down on the P.I.N.G button and shot off the deck. He flew back to M.O.N.T.A.G.U.E with no further problems. He got off the pod and ran to his room.

A few days later, a meeting letter

came through:

Hello crew of M.O.N.T.A.G.U.E,

I would like to arrange a meeting. We will launch the pod between our ships, and we will talk.

Your dear friends, the crew of C.A.P.U.L.E.T.

"I will go!" Mercutio shouted. "Romeo too. And obviously father."

And so they did. The system was set up from C.A.P.U.L.E.T and sent out between the stations. Everything went fine until the end of the meeting. Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, got out a gun, spun round and shot Mercutio. His body collapsed. Romeo froze before slamming a button on the wall. The docking pad dropped, and Tybalt was sucked off before Romeo let go and the pod closed up again. Everything had happened in a few seconds. Romeo fell to his knees.

"What have I done?!" he cried.

"Get away from this place!" his father yelled. "GET AWAY FROM US. GET OUT!!!"

Romeo was sent in a small pod away from the crews to a nearby planet and put into orbit. All he had was a bed, a kitchen and a toilet.

"Please help me uncle," said Juliet.

"With what darling?"

"I'm in love."

"And?"

"He's from M.O.N.T.A.G.U.E."

"Oh..."

"He's been exiled."

"Ohh..."

"I want to see him again."

"... I may have an idea."

"What?"

"Death..." He paused. "You should fake your death."

"How?"

"I have a mixture that will completely shut down your system for a brief amount of time. The neuromortofein-toxin.

And so it went. Juliet took the drug and got sent off in a funeral pod.

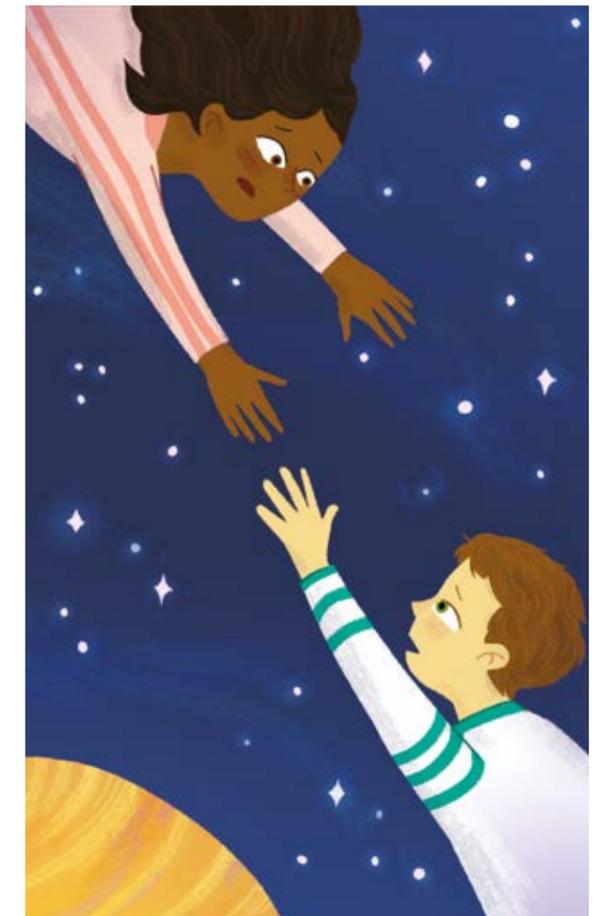
Romeo looked out his window and sighed before his alarm went off.

"INCOMING FUNERAL POD, PLEASE PAY YOUR RESPECTS."

"What?" Romeo muttered, "What? WHAT?" He looked out the window

at the incoming craft. Juliet's face stared out the window at him, pale as a corpse. She was a corpse. She was dead. He turned to the wall, one wish in mind. He hit the airlock button and jumped out. She woke up.

"ROMEO!" she yelled, but he never heard. His life was leaving him. She turned, hit her airlock button and jumped out as well, just as the pod revolved and hit her gently in the wrong direction. They drifted apart, never to see each other again, just as the world went black for Romeo.



Our Tomorrow

by **Emily Spratt**, KS4 Winner, Brighton and Hove Clinic School (Elysium Education)

Devastation.

Terror.

Apocalypse.

How did it come to this?

As the crisp autumn air swiftly rattled through the solemn streets, sounds of joy and laughter valiantly filled the air. Brittle, beige, barren leaves hopelessly departed from their wasted branches, like isolated tears running down a distressed child's face. Dismantled remains gathered like a pile of cars and building parts residing in ruins stacked upon each other like Jenga blocks, hanging like a backdrop to the unfolding scene. The sky painted in a deep shade of depression with weighted clouds, gargantuan as the heavens, ready to pour down a waterfall of despair over the already deprived town. Meanwhile, unsettling fragments of debris migrated their way around what was left of once knowledge-filled schools, factories and offices that now lay in dilapidation, patiently waiting to be noticed. The city, with a miniscule population of less than one hundred, now seemed to feel

more like a continent, stripped of all its belongings and identity, left bare naked, defenceless, and unrecognisable. The post-apocalyptic life.

This future world, our tomorrow, my life, how did it come to this you ask? Well, five years prior, a devastating war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia after a disagreement in governments causing rapid rates of death and destruction, not to mention alienation. Many fled to faraway towns, cities and refugee camps in desperation of help, some successful in their abscond, unfortunately others not so much. Their lifeless remains rest uneasy; an unsettling reminder of the battle-ridden past. Day-to-day life was never the same as it was those lonely years ago. Endless nights are spent sleepless, haunted by my dreams whenever I close my eyes, no matter how hard I try. Jubilation is a rarity only found in the smallest of things, such as the scarce occasion of the sun shining through the impenetrable solemn lit clouds, or the ear-piercing screech of local birds wrestling over leftover

scraps found rotting away. At least it represses the daily deafening silence, right?

So, what of tomorrow? Does the future stretch before us unchanged, irreparable, hopeless? I would like to think not. To leave this war-plagued planet behind and forget the mayhem it has caused us all would be more than a miracle. Oppression runs cold while governments lay responsible, trying to cover

up their mistakes with new beginnings – bribes replacing scarred memories with new shiny ones. In the hope of diverting the unwanted attention, we try to picture the administration as “caring”. So let me propose to you this: I will not let the dishevelled olden times take a hold of futuristic beginnings. From now on, if we can believe hard enough, fiction, our dreams could possibly become a reality – all we can do is hope.



Routine

by **Adrienn Baczur**, KS5 Winner

Five in the morning, he wakes. At six, he flips the sign on the door, and by seven, the small shop becomes a crowded space. For him, the old ways aren't forgotten and never will be. For them, it is a different story. He greets Mrs Maple at the till with a nod and blocks out her ramblings of the latest news headlines shown on her social media accounts. Media has only grown in the past decades, taking over all forms of the old ways, like newspapers and magazines. They said it was to create a more environmentally friendly world, yet anyone with eyes could see, it was to increase the flow of money for the Creators. He would call them capitalists, then again, that is a forbidden phrase in their new world. After Mrs Maple, comes the group of Glarers. He thinks his nickname for them is self-explanatory, not that he would ever risk calling them that to their faces. They are the next generation of Creators, or so they say. He sees them as brainless robots, with wasted potential. However, it isn't their fault. No, the Creators were to blame mainly for creating such toxic items, then of course the people who

let those addictive items take over. Unfortunately, he too was to blame. He should have done more to stop the creation of this new world. He watches as five teenagers pay for five – identical – glass-bottled drinks. It isn't until the bell above the door rings and the Doctor arrives, that he notices it is nearly time to close up. The Doctor comes every day at five in the afternoon, making her his last customer. He limps along and flips the sign as the Doctor browses around for her usual meal deal. Back at the till she asks how his day is going, and he replies with his grunt, whilst she looks on with pity. The Doctor wishes a goodnight, and the lights flicker out after her.

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Mrs Maple looks very concerned when he flips the sign of the shop at seven the next day. The Glarers have reduced in numbers to three, and their glares are no longer as fierce as the days before. The shop does not become crowded,

but the Doctor arrives on time at five all the same. She tells him cautiously that word has spread in town, and he should not sleep in again if he knows what is good for him. For once, she pities without asking how he is and leaves

without her usual goodnight wish. He knows he committed an offence before the letter from the Creators arrives at eight pm. He pays the fine for breaking the Routine at the Techbase in town. It used to be a beautiful, five-floor library, with literature diverse in age and of a variety of genres. Now, the five floors are filled with rows and columns of computers; for the needy ones like him, who still believe in the old ways and refuse to waste money on such modern devices. Well no, that is not entirely true. He too bought a computer once...

Five in the morning, he wakes. At six, he flips the sign on the door, and by seven the small shop becomes a crowded space. He greets Mrs Maple at the till with a nod and blocks out her ramblings of the latest news headlines. After her, come the five Glarers, who pay for five glass-bottled drinks. The Doctor comes at five in the afternoon. She asks, he grunts, she pities. Goodnight; lights out.

It is at seven twenty-two am, the following day, when Mrs Maple shocks the shop into silence, as she breaks the Routine. She asks when his husband was coming back from holiday, says she misses his lively presence. The five Glarers stand behind her wide-eyed, but instead of apologising profusely, Mrs Maple waits for his

answer expectantly. He does not know what to say, how to reply to such a question after months of conforming to the Routine and pushing away his memories of what once was. After minutes of unscheduled silence, her gaze turns sympathetic and she quietly questions if they parted ways. He nods automatically and scans her items. A holiday; that's a new one. He always wondered when someone would question his lover's missing presence, but after months of silence, he believed they had forgotten him. Not that he was easy to forget.

He flips the sign to 'closed' at four-thirty in the afternoon that very same day. He knows another letter with a fine will be issued but he cares not. Despite the sign, the Doctor walks in at five, as if nothing is amiss. He readily waits for her approach at the till.

"You did not inform me that the Creators refused to acknowledge my husband's passing." The Doctor looks up at him, frightened by his tone, "Was it because of his sexuality or because his demise happened by his hand?" She shakes her head apologetically.

He should not have been surprised, looking back. Even in the new glammed up world, not everything can be perfect. Goodnight; lights out.

Journey Log

by **Aidan Harris**, Scotland Winner,
Our Lady's High School

JL0 – Launch Day. I'm Dan, I'm 11 and I'm really nervous. I'm one of 4 other kids joining the mission to Saturn to harvest Helium-3 to transport back to earth as a nuclear fuel source. Earth is running out of raw materials; this mission is vital to saving life as we know it. We get to go on the trip because all our parents are astronauts selected to join the colony orbiting Saturn. If the launch goes well, you'll hear from me in my next Journey Log.

JL4 – We did it, we're up in space! When we first arrived, I felt sick, and I wanted to go back home. The only good thing in here so far is that there is no gravity; I can bounce off the walls, but I must be careful around the computers and stuff. This journey will take 9 months; we are so lucky it is not 2021 because this journey would've taken them 8 years – that's ridiculous!

JL17 – The sleeping is weird up here. I've been up here for 16 nights and it's already better than Earth sleeping – that's boring. But up here we sleep in beanbags and float around in little pods – we don't even need mattresses!

Brushing your teeth is weird as well – you need to swallow the foam because there is nowhere to spit it out on a spaceship.

JL34 – I love Football, but coming up to space, you don't get the chance to play it. That's why me and this other kid, Vladimir, decided to play our own floating version of the game. You see I brought one into space. We played penalties, but before I could hit the ball, a member of the team caught us and we both got sent to our sleeping stations. We'll need to try and hide better next time!

JL68 – This week my chore was rubbish collection, so I had to collect all the vacuum-packed rubbish bags from around the ship, attaching each one to my belt and pulling them behind me. I was almost at the main storage room when one of the bags snagged on a metal bar and ripped. All the rubbish floated everywhere and got into so many of the machines – the adults were not happy at all! Oops!

JL99 – Can't believe that tomorrow I'll have been in space for 100 days!

JL127 – In space everyone rations their food, so we don't run out. A few days before we launched, we were each given a ration book, which was kind of weird as I've never had to think about what I'm going to eat before. For lunch today I had mashed potatoes and a wrap which is a weird combination. But I'm running out of ration vouchers, so I've had to eat some weird things lately! I'm looking forward to starting next month's ration book!

JL166 – Even space school is boring. You'd think by now they'd have worked out how to download knowledge into our brains! But in our lesson today our connection was really bad and when we were doing our work the hologram froze on our teacher while she was picking her nose! It was the funniest bit of this whole trip!

JL189 – I had a video-call with my grandparents today and I got to see my dog. I was so excited before it. Now I just feel really sad. I miss them. Bedtime. :(

JL209 – I made a stupid decision. I got my new ration book. I ate all my sweets, didn't I? Now I feel sick and I have to wait a WHOLE MONTH until I get any more!!!

JL233 – Today is the best day ever! Try and guess! It comes around every year... the only occasion

that is only about you... have you guessed it? Yip, today is my birthday. It was quite different though; I didn't get any presents to open because of weight-restrictions but I got some old retro VR-games which is really cool! I've been wanting to play these games to find out what gaming was like in the olden days! I didn't have a normal birthday cake, but I was surprised with a slice of freeze-dried cake which was dry and a bit weird but actually tasted the same! There were no candles though – we aren't allowed flames here! I didn't even get to see my dad much because he was working. But the most important thing I got was a video call to see my friends back home on earth. Tommy has long hair now and Christopher's front teeth finally grew in! I wonder if they thought I looked different too?

JL249 – Today I realized that I moan loads. I complain about rations, not getting to play football, having to do chores AND especially space school... but I really need to stop! I looked out one of the windows earlier and thought about where I was. Other kids would love this privilege; looking out to space is amazing, learning everything is amazing and this is probably the greatest experience I'll have in my whole life. I'm so lucky.



JL269 – Today I overheard this conversation between my dad and one of the other astronauts who works in the engine room. I heard them talking about something being damaged, but I couldn't make out exactly what they were talking about. Then I heard them talking about our link up day to the space station. Sounds like something very important and their voices sounded stressed and worried. Now I'm worried too. We could be in real trouble...

JL270 – [UNKNOWN TRANSMISSION ERROR]

JL271 – [UNKNOWN TRANSMISSION ERROR]

JL272 – [UNKNOWN TRANSMISSION ERROR]

JL273 – We did it! I'm so relieved! Especially after what I overheard the other day. But we linked up with the space station 3 hours ago and it was the best feeling ever! So weird seeing all these new faces! So that's my journey log over. Tomorrow will be day one of my space-station log – and I can't wait to get started!



New Atlantis

by **Emma-Louise White**, Northern Ireland Winner

13 April 3030, New Atlantis

"Cora! Wake up! These dolphins won't feed themselves!" shouts Papa.

"Coming Papa!" I shout back whilst hauling myself out of bed.

Yes, you heard me correctly, we look after dolphins. That's my family's business, ever since the Big Move anyway.

"Cora, get down here now!"

I quickly pull on my light blue t-shirt and jeans, switch my oxygen helmet from sleeping to awake and dash into the kitchen.

"Finally!" sighed Papa. "Eat your breakfast then go feed the dolphins."

"I left your pancakes on the table Cora," says Mama. I eat up quickly then go see the dolphins.

Sky, Indigo and Violet are our three performing dolphins. We travel around New Atlantis performing with them. It means I am constantly changing schools and let's just say it straight, it's not easy being the new girl. But I love

my family, so I do what they need me to do. I live with my Papa, Mama and Grandpa. Grandma Caroline died before the Big Move, I never even met her. Grandpa talks about her all the time. His stories are the best in New Atlantis!

After I fed the dolphins, giving Sky (my favourite) a few extra fish, I brought Grandpa a cup of tea.

"Morning starshine!"

"Morning Grandpa! Here is your tea!"

"Thank you Cora. Nothing like a cup of tea to start the day."

I sat down on the side of Grandpa's bed looking expectantly at him as he drank his tea.

"I know that face! Ready for a story?"

"Yes!"

"Today I am going to tell you a different kind of story, not the usual pirates and fairies. Today I am going to tell you a story about my life before the Big Move."



14 January 2092, London

It was a balmy winter's evening, all the world leaders were together in Buckingham Palace discussing the future of humanity. The temperature on Earth was rising rapidly and soon the surface would be too hot to live on. Humanity had years to relocate. Many people believed all hope was lost and that the human race was heading to extinction but Professor David Williams had a plan. Most people thought he had lost his marbles but he presented the world leaders with some astonishing evidence that they had to listen to.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Professor David Williams and I am here today to present to you my solution for our current catastrophe. It may sound crazy but I beg you to listen. I suggest that we move civilisation underwater." Although the current situation is dire, everyone in the room laughs. Elizabeth Wilson, the President of the United States, shouts sarcastically, "Ok Professor, tell us your theory because I don't know about you, but I can't breathe underwater!" Everyone laughs aloud again.

"Well I have created a helmet, similar to an astronaut's, that allows us to survive underwater," he replies.

Zhou Huang, the representative of China, says "Show us this helmet!"

Professor David Williams signals to his assistant who brings in a human-sized water tank. David puts on the helmet and jumps into the water. He remains there for 10 minutes before he is helped out.

For the next few years humanity starts mass producing the helmets and making preparations for their move underwater, also known as 'The Big Move'.

24 July 2092, Birch Wood Ranch, Norfolk

"Caroline! The news is on!"

Caroline leaves her spaghetti bolognese cooking and sits down beside Jim to watch the television.

"Welcome to BBC News, today it has been announced that all men aged 18-55 who are fit to do manual labour will receive a letter assigning them a job to help with Project New Atlantis."

Jim mutes the television. They sit in silence until Jim finally says, "It looks like I'll be leaving the farm for a while."

"Yes it does," Caroline replies solemnly.

13 April 3030, New Atlantis

"Grandpa! You were a farmer!"

"Yes and how I loved it. The smell of fresh grass every morning was glorious, absolutely glorious!"

"What happened next Grandpa?"

"I had to go work as a builder underwater. I was one of the first to try out the helmets."

"You mean you didn't always have to wear a helmet?"

"No, and let me tell you, life was far better without them. Putting it on for the first time was the most bizarre experience of my life."

15 September 2094, Birch Wood Ranch, Norfolk

Jim came home after a long day's work to the empty, dark, lonely house. Nothing had been the same since Caroline had passed away a month ago. His son had his own wife so Jim found himself alone most of the time. Humanity was moving underwater at the start of the new year. Jim was going to move in with his son and daughter-in-law in the east of New Atlantis. He was looking forward to some company again. He put some of the previous night's leftovers in the microwave for his dinner and sat down in the kitchen.

13 April 3030, New Atlantis

"Oh Grandpa, you must have been so lonely. I am glad you came to live with Papa and Mama."

"Me too."

"I wish I could see the surface."

"Well I am afraid it looks completely different now. We can never live up there again. It's such a shame. If our selfish ancestors had listened to the science about climate change, we could still be living there now."

"Why didn't they Grandpapa?"

"They were too concerned about business and profit to care about the future of our amazing planet."

"That is heinous! I can't believe it!"

"I know sweetheart, we are the ones paying the price for their actions. Never seeing the sun set, never seeing the waves crash, never seeing the trees grow. It is disgraceful but there is nothing we can do about it. All we can do is make sure we don't destroy this new underwater utopia of ours."

Audire

by **Holly Thorpe**, Wales Winner, Coleg Cambria

Static is brewing. It's like a kettle boiling, a kettle full of sheet metal screws.

Please please please stop.

I punctuate my begging against the tree, banging the crown of my head against it. I change position, smash my temple into the trunk, and supplicate, grasp onto wooden knees. I have to stop and be sick next to the roots, then I let myself fall back against bark. Even out here in the red zones, at the edge of the country, the edge of the forest, the connections from the city can still push through: electronically fired-up neurons nervously fumbling tea bags to one another, trying to throw one over to me. The static is the only human sound I've heard in months. Hopefully there will be a point in my life when I hear no human sound at all.

Below, I see a woman standing on a roof, a bin bag in her hand. The flood must have risen, but god knows how she got up there. I saw her last month, I think, trying to carry out an urn and a stuffed bear, but she got caught in a flood then too, the urn falling out of her grip and its inhabitant dissolving

into the water like sugar in coffee. I saw her earlier, when I went down to fish. She was walking through the middle of the town, tracing her fingers over the ruins of a raised flowerbed. I carried the fish back by its tail, gripping it like you would an old money sack, cowboy loot, back to my spot: the tree with the careful concave that I have created. Maybe I should find a place with two of these thick trees opposite each other so I can push myself forward and back instead of having to turn around to hit both sides of my head. I can be a metronome, humming as I rock between them.



Maybe, after I'm gone, they will make up stories. Maybe they will say that there were giants that rose out of the sea with every flood, that one of them mistook this tree for a column of mousse and, being the tentative eater that it was, dipped only a teaspoon into the trunk.

But no giants do come out, and if they did, I would know; I always like to watch the floods, see the town below eaten away. It's like watching a starving child eat a roast dinner. On this hill, it is close enough to see it all clearly, to see furniture leak out of smashed windows, but far enough away to be untouched. I thought there would be a flood tonight, so that's why I got the fish – I decided I would make an occasion of it.

I can set up the fire now the static is calming down. If I focus on slowly pulling out one of the few remaining matches from my coat, I can almost make it blend in with the sound of the sea, the sound of smashing glass. I can fix it.

The fire begins and so does the smoke, coming in and blocking my view at the perfect time. The sky is warping again, light blue and purple mashing together like some cosmic illness, some rash. I've been getting rashes, actually. I think it's the fish. Must cook it properly this time. Maybe I should

share some with her. Maybe I should at least call out to her. Maybe a giant will eat her whole.

Look down. I am shocked to find my hands. Fingernails like flattened out retinas, all of them looking at me. I've never seen Athena bathe, but I see the sense in the creation of a blind prophet; things like this remind me that there must be some inherent perversion in sight. I look up and root around in my pocket for gloves. There. No longer my hands, just filled-out black fabric.

Through gaps in the grey, I see the bin bag slip out of the woman's hand as she climbs up onto the chimney, the water prowling up towards her. I see little rectangles of blurred faces spill out of the bag as it splashes into the water. Her head lowers as she clings on, but then she lifts it, ever so slightly, to look out towards the sea, as if she has heard some siren beckon her. Then she screams.

She screams and I feel drunk. Senses numbed, everything set on edge, sharpened claws dragging down a blackboard, snagging on the slate. Something fulfilling. This is human sound, I'd forgotten, and it is wonderful. A quiet thudding begins in my head and I reach up to it. All I feel against my fingers is warm. I don't look to see what is left on my gloves. I



look at her, but she is looking at me. Waving. The sight of her is shameless, impudently so. What does it matter, to see a drowning stranger, or a swinging mother? Don't burst open the door, Theban, seize the broaches now, back to the frame, and plunge yourself into innocence.

She lingers in the corner of my eye, a lump of debris. Must have fallen. She is not the focus. There, the flood, weaving in and out of itself. Beautiful, the way it reveals and conceals the light. It is not the focus. The focus is the sound: indulgence. Indulgence is

her voice, stretched to its limit, drowning against the sound of bricks collapsing around her. But she's ruining it.

Now I know the flood shall be the last thing I see. Once this is over, I will crawl around the ruins, hands out, until I come across a knife. Plunging into innocence, as the blind prophet suggested. One swift mark across the eyes, cutting briefly into cartilage.

I hold the skewered fish over the fire and turn it slowly. I will make sure I cook it right this time.

The Day the Monsters Came

by **Erin Cooper**, North East Winner

I still remember the day the monsters came. We all thought that we were prepared, but we weren't. Not for this. When somebody says zombies, we think of slow, bumbling, brainless creatures driven only by hunger for human brains. Simple. Obvious. The monsters were nothing like that.

We didn't even notice them at first- we only took notice when the disappearances became too great to ignore. Twenty one people in the space of seven months, ranging from five to thirty three. There were cries of kidnap, mass murder and mysterious plots. But there was no evidence. They were all gone without a trace, except for one.

Cara Talby, eleven years old, had left her doll behind. Her family claims that she never went anywhere without it, and so something terrible must have happened to her. That's when they came.

Twenty seven days after the investigations began, there came a report. An anonymous report from a man who had claimed to have been out walking with their

dog, when their dog had gone stiff, its fur on end. Without a warning, it dashed off through the trees, their owner taking a moment to realise what had just happened. The sound of mad, repetitive barking tore through the trees; this was followed by a sharp yelp and crunching sounds. The man had reportedly run towards the sound, only to arrive to silence: that, and a pile of mangled flesh and bones. The poor dog -or what was left of it- looked like something had taken chunks out of it at random. The man had next seen a shape looming over it. He had described it as 'easily passable for a human, if it wasn't for the teeth. Huge things, all crammed in there. Sharp as needles they were, 'lot thicker though. Made me feel nauseous, the sight of 'em all. Of course, I did the natural thing and legged it. If I hadn't fallen into this little covered ditch along the way, I'd have been done for. It came running past me at an incredible speed. I'm glad it got caught up in the chase, or I'd have been done for. Wish poor Barker got off so easily'.

Naturally, this report sent everyone into a state of panic.



How could we have known things would get so much worse?

The attacks became more common, more vicious. The final straw was when the President of France was killed. People started arming themselves, boarding up their houses, stockpiling food and drinks. The monsters seemed to multiply, but it was always clear which were the big ones. Soon it became unsafe even to sleep, for multiple reasons. I'll get to that in a moment. Living in the apocalypse for three years, you learn things.

The monsters tend to disguise themselves as humans, in an attempt to dull suspicion and work their way into groups of survivors. They can't disguise themselves without a certain... something, though. This was the worst truth of all.

They say the human mind is easily susceptible to corruption and influence. Deny it all you like, but it's true. I mean, when one of the potential murderers is a five-year-old child- but I'll back up a bit. About half a year in,

through lots of observations (and even more deaths) a discovery was made. The creatures, these mindless beasts, intent only on destruction and devouring the human race, weren't alone. They had two voices, two eye colours, two almost indistinguishable personalities. But we found out. Those first twenty seven people, the ones who humanity viewed as warning us with their lives: were a part of the monsters.

The reason I know this? We wouldn't if it wasn't for the film evidence. Modern security cameras are a miracle, really. But on the 7th of November, a security camera managed to film the dreadful, dreadful truth. Jane Williams and Samuel Harris were both seen on camera, being confronted by two creatures. One seemed to try negotiating, while the other attacked from behind. The end result was the same each time. The monsters removed and ate the heart. Neither Jane nor Samuel got five metres, and considering Jane was on the school running team, the monsters were definitely elite and more than a little scary. The creatures seemed to perform this weird ritual, with some pretty deep breathing exercises. There was a weird form on the camera, vaguely in the shape of the two recently deceased teens, which started walking slowly towards the

monsters before disappearing into them. The worst part was yet to come. The corpses disintegrated, and as they did so, the monsters started... changing. Bending and stretching, shrinking slightly, growing more humanoid. They stopped moving for a few seconds after, and seemed disorientated, shocked even.

Now I know this may seem unbelievable, or you may be thinking 'Okay, maybe it just makes them look more human', but stay with me. When the victims' families were shown the footage, there were shocked and horrified cries from mothers, fathers and siblings. While the creatures' features were distinctly unrecognisable, there was a clear difference between the monsters' eyes. Before the attack, they had distinct eyes, headlamp white and crystal blue. But now, they were emerald green and a deep shade of brown. The exact same as the victims' eyes. When the monsters finally lost their disoriented state, the eyes changed half back. There were investigations on a massive scale, denial and cover-ups: but the truth was out. And believe me, it's a whole lot harder to accept that the creatures hunting you down and seeking to devour you were once just like you.

Our Tomorrow

by **Larrie Marsh**, North West Winner,
The Mosslands School

Daer pasd self,

I'm ritting to tell yoo abowt the footure. Youre probiblee siting in your bedroome now plaeing fifa 22 on your xbox but wen yoo are 100 yoo will be plaeing fifa 2109 on your plaestashin 36.

I have reesentlee installed Jast Eat onto my brain pad, so now i only haf to think of what i want to eat and 10 minits later the robot named gijk brings it to mi door!

Don't worree about getting owld and getting to 100, becos wen your legs get worn owt and frayle yoo just get new ones from Amazon 101, by ordiring off the brain pad. Mi new ones arrayved yesturday and Robo-Joe helpd mi get them on; there fastir the mi wee old pear.

Everywan has a Robo-Joe or Robo-Josephene. Myne is programm d to: walk mi 30 Germin shephards (did i tell yoo we now have 30 dogz?), to cleen my sleeping chaymba, makez sure mi brain pad is chargd, make sure hees chargd and help mi put mi new bodie partz on wen they wear owt.

Oh, yoo will be really pleezed to heer theres no skool from 2022. In Desemba there was an owtbrake of Covid 21, and all the teecherz disided to do onnline lessonz evaa sinse but knowbodie really duzn't affekt your edukashin at all. Look at mi! I can stil reed and rite!

Yours From Footure Larry.



Winters of Our Tomorrow

by **Taya Brown**, Yorkshire and the Humber Winner,
Baysgarth School

Death crawls through the alleys of the worthless city. Darkness borders its people. Bleak gloom has painted the sky. The sun has been put to rest. Snow falls silently and floods the roads, clinging to the ongoing cars. Lampposts illuminate the lonely souls aimlessly wandering on the streets below our tomorrow.

Absentmindedly, I gaze out the window. Children are attached to screens, their eyes glossy with disappointment. What has life become? A neglected hope. I couldn't tell you how the old times were, but somehow, I missed them. We've damaged the futures of our tomorrow.

Poison floods the air. Smoke cuts the air like a knife. Birds fly in flocks weaving their way through the opaque clouds and disappearing on the other side. Toxic water makes its way through the world, layered with bottles and plastic bags. How can we change our tomorrow?

My footsteps echo in the road. I stumble into the park; benches are frozen over; icicles are hanging

for dear life and the metal rust is stiff on the swings. Out of the darkness, I see a small flower reaching up for the sky. I find reassurance in the beauty of nature. Nature rests with me. It still manages to take my breath away; nature dances my troubles away. It holds my hand and takes me to another world. Another world away from our tomorrow...



Ingamed

by **Leo Templer**, London Winner, Fortismere School

James was lying in his bed gazing up at the ceiling. "Nothing ever happens in this city..." he thought. Suddenly a crooked spider lowered its creepy legs and dangled over James. He carelessly swung at the creature then got up and strolled downstairs. On the TV was the normal news about boring life. All he heard was "blah blah".

He walked to the kitchen where his dad was making breakfast.

"Here you go, sweetie," his dad said, passing him a bacon sandwich.

While James was eating his breakfast the news droned on in the background.

"There are numerous rocks crashing to the Earth and soon the sun will collapse and destroy us all."

James suddenly paid more attention.

"Scientists have figured out a way to upload us digitally into a new online world called Ingamed."

James couldn't believe his ears as he rushed over to the TV with his dad running behind.

"Everyone will be sent an email and when you click the link you will go back to normal life but inside the screens." James was shocked as hell, his dad started crying.

"WHAT IN THE WORLD?!" screamed James.

His dad sobbed quietly, "They warned us about this, but I didn't think it would ever happen."

James looked at his dad and they imagined what life would be like in the Ingamed.

"The emails will be sent in two days," said the man on the TV.

Their lives were about to change forever.

Suddenly the doorbell rang. James ran over, still in shock. It was Oli, his friend.

"Have you seen the news?" he said.

"Yep, it's horrible."

"Are you kidding, we are going into a real-life video game!"

"I guess you're right," said James, feeling a bit better. He loved video games.



Two days later

James woke up feeling sadness creep through him. He trailed to his dad, and they looked at each other and then the phone.

“Oh well, this is going to be some roller coaster ride, hey.”

“Yes, but I’m a bit scared,” said James. They hugged each other and looked at the phone as the email appeared in the inbox. They looked out the window and they could see the sun – it was clearly in trouble, instead of burning yellow, it had changed to a smokey blue colour. Life on Earth was about to change forever and if they didn’t click the link, they would be destroyed. They had no choice.

“Bye world,” they both said as they clicked the email!

A tingling sensation leapt through them as all their memories flashed before their eyes.

A dark orange swirl replaced James’ dad’s phone as their humanoid bodies were uploaded into a pixelated universe. They didn’t say a word as the swirl sucked them up, transforming them into digital versions of themselves in Ingamed.

One year later

“Online world is pretty much the same except have you ever noticed, there’s no spiders here?” James said to Oli, as they kicked a virtual football around in the park.

“Yeah. There are no insects at all!”

“Do you remember what a bacon sandwich really tasted like?” said Oli, gazing up at the perfect digital sun.

One Day in the Future

by **Jessica Smith**, East Anglia Winner,
Abbey College and Sixth Form

Beep. Beep. Beep. The noise was getting louder. Beep. And louder. BEEP! I shot up. The fantasies of the night instantly vanished. Reality. I scraped the sleep from my eyes and adjusted to the harsh light of the morning. Once my vision greeted me, I reached for the button that would start my day. The whirl surrounded me, my bed fled from beneath me and my feet touched the warm, sweaty floor. My heavy steps searched for the source of light and discovered the window. And thankfully, the window seat. I waved my long hands to signal for fresh air and another whirl granted my need.

Outside was quiet. These days seeing someone exiting their house was like seeing a talking dog walking on its hind legs. It didn’t happen. I surveyed the never-ending row of cubes that I called home and was surprised by the faraway sound of chirping. It lasted for a few moments and unsurprisingly faded. A stampede of silent cars floated by as the sun grew hotter with every second. I vacated the sweltering sky and retreated to my lonesome cube.

It had been sizzling for countless days; the grass had withered away, and the streams had disappeared. I caught a glimpse of myself in the misty mirror. My young skin appeared old and dry surrounded by the yellow coils of my malnourished hair. The only thing that remained rich in this heat was the twinkle in my blue eyes. I looked away. No longer pleased by the woman I saw in the glass.

Twelve o’clock. I gathered my choice of food for the day and snuck towards the rear of my abode. I approached the symmetrical doors, they opened, and I was attacked by the suffocating air. I soldiered on, my naked feet crunching the thirsty grass beneath until I came to a halt at the parched fence. I placed my lunch on the ground and covered the brown carpet with a blanket. Before I took my seat, I pressed my hand against the burning (fake) wood until I found what I was searching for. A loose (fake) wood panel. I manoeuvred the panel until it fell at my red, swollen feet. She was there. Waiting for me.

Our twinkling blue eyes caught each other, and we beamed at one another. We took our usual places; she on one side, me on the other. It had been months of the same routine. She was younger than me, barely a teenager, but our

friendship ignored that. Now, her golden locks caught the glistening sun as we parted greetings. Her family was normal: father, mother, sister. But she was different. Every day she carried with her an air of question. Of course, I could never



answer these ceaseless questions, but they echoed through my head relentlessly. We shared our food and began our hour of escape. We talked, we laughed, and we shared our mornings. When it was time to depart, we embraced through the opening; our damp, burning skin colliding. I returned the (fake) wood panel and strolled slowly back to my cube. Alone.

The silence was quieter than usual. I rushed to the window and the power cut was confirmed. The cars stood still; their lifeline had been removed. It happened every couple of days; the world paused and waited to resume. It provided a moment of deliberation. I retrieved my albums and began scrolling. Each page a different chapter of my life. In every picture I was surrounded by three people. My father, my mother, and my sister. All the photos leading to that day. It was hot and the water came out of nowhere, I looked for them and I couldn't find them and then darkness. Darkness that hasn't gone away since. My grief was interrupted...

BREAKING NEWS! The screen lit up and the whirl of electricity was restored. The robot-like newsreader declared the cause of the loss of energy: "Today the power was lost as a result of heavy rainfall at the power hub. After a few weeks of hot weather,

we had not predicted such rainfall. However, emergency services are responding, and power has returned to most people." The robot disappeared and the screen went blank. I placed my memories under the sofa and continued my daily rituals.

The sun was fading, and the moon was climbing the darkening sky. Stars began to pierce holes in the black blanket above as I tucked into my lonely feast. It was the usual sounds as I sat solemnly with my thoughts. A continuous humming, faraway birds and my knife and fork sawing through my mindful meal. Although, there was an unusual sound. It was getting louder and louder. What is it? Is it coming closer? I hurried to my murky window to seek out the answer. In the corner of my eye, I could see the reflection of the moon, low on the ground. It was moving, shifting, and becoming magnified. Realisation struck me hard. It was water. It was water coming closer. It was water rising higher and higher. I panicked. I paced around the room begging for a solution; praying I would find an endless set of stairs to whisk me away from this bad dream. It was no use. The water began to barricade the doors and windows. I thought about her and them. I will see them soon...

A Twist in the Tale

by **Phoebe Harris**, South East Winner,
Lord Wandsworth College

In 2051 there was a pretty little girl:
Long chestnut locks and pale eyes,
loving life with a
fondness for naps and hatred for
pickles.
She loves the thrill of a run:
Sweat framing her face, pink
flushing her cheeks.

Her mother had always said tie
your hair up when running
And she had never asked why.
She had never asked why her
mum never walked alone at night.
Why did she have a gazillion
copies of her passport stashed in
various cupboards?
Why did she make sure that every
Saturday they walk down to the
police station?
"You need to know where it is,"
her mother had always told her
Never asked why.

One rare, pleasant day, during
A break in the torrential tantrum
the clouds were throwing
The girl decides to go for a run.

She braids her hair into two thick
plaits
And she starts to stretch:
A lunge, a squat, and then another
lunge.
Then she takes a deep breath and
shuts the safe front door

Runs, runs, runs, runs, runs, runs,
runs, runs, runs, runs, runs
Until she is completely exhausted
and unable to think or
to sweep the area.
She does not notice that the roads
are slightly wider,
Streets slightly more cobbled, cars
moving slightly faster,
The bus stop on the right instead
of the left, houses more square
the school more bricked, too big,
An office crammed between two
odd, whitewashed buildings
A run-down hotel, a dim
restaurant, a bored bank.

This is not her town
Dizziness comforts her tired limbs
Shaking hands, tingling lips



Breath unable to reach her
A suffocating sensation.

She turns, around and around:
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings.
A person coming nearer.
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings.
Lanky with short close-cropped
hair-
Bearings, bearings, bearings.
A strange fellow,
Bearings, bearings, bearings
Coming closer, closer, too close
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings.

"You look lost sweetheart,"
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings
A sinister smile, on a thin mouth
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings
"Let me show you around."
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings

"No"
"No?"
"No"
"Really?"
"Yes"

Bearings, bearings, bearings
The streets which were slightly
too cobbled, were deserted, the
restaurant empty

Bearings, Bearings, Bearings.
"I think you are lost pretty doll,"
A jewelled pearly thing.
Bearings, Bearings, Bearings.
No.
A knife glinting in the sun,
which fit almost seamlessly in the
man's massive hands
"I'll show you around, pretty doll,"
Bearings, Bearings, bearings
He took a step forward
Bearings, Bearings, bearings
She could feel the phantom pain
just by looking at the knife
Inches from her chest.

"Why don't I show you to my
apartment,"
She didn't ask why
She had never inquired as to why,
Bearings, Bearings, bearings

Race, race, race, race, race, race,
race, race, race, race, race
As quick as she could
Away from the man, away from
the town
His footsteps echoing hers, almost
vibrating the cobblestone street,
His hand always coming closer,
obsessing over her every move

As quick as a whip she spied over
her shoulder
Dry hands, micrometres away
from her thick heavy braids
Her heart was thumping, head
spinning, breath catching in her
throat,
And she turned her head quickly,
almost getting whiplash,
His hand slipping from her two
thick plaits

And she sprinted, sprinted,
sprinted, long after he had lost
the race
Back to her town, back to her
house, back to her safe front door
Which she bolted and locked
And turned to face her mum.

"Thank you so much," she
whispered
"For everything,
For your advice,
For telling me to always tie my hair
up when out running,"

So she went back to having a
fondness for naps,
And a dislike for pickles,
But always her encounter haunted
her,
The phantom pain from the knife

always playing in the back of her
mind
In case you forgot, this was set in
2051
Unless we change our tomorrow
Unless outdated policies are
changed,
Unless new laws are enacted
Unless safety of everybody is
the government's most principal
priority,
Then in 2051 these things will still
happen
And next time the person may not
have their hair tied up.
Twist the tale
So by 2051,
Being terrified that your daughter
will get harassed on a run
Will be a thing of 2021.



A Mother's Plea

by **Sophia Papasouliotis**, South West Winner,
Churchill Academy and Sixth Form

At the beginning of time, I lay my body to provide your paths. I offered myself to be the mother of all nature, the divine hostess of life. For a long while, we lived in sweet harmony; I provided for you the way a mother should and in return, you treated me with infinite respect. I wonder what changed, what fostered this passion and this urge to destruct and destroy until you're left with nothing. In the process, you have killed your own mother.

My children, sweet and dear with your green fingers and soft thumbs, what more could you want? I gave you a life of colour; plentiful, scattered with tender fruits and jubilant summer suns. In exchange you smothered me with plastic, choked me out with noxious fumes. I have cried out for help, shrieked, and shouted for you to listen. But I was ignored, and you kept on with your same ways. Your own mother's calls were reduced to 'falsities' and you continued for another millennium. Another millennium of new spaceships and dying species, of industry growth and rising temperatures. My body became

a warpath as you tried to fend off death with the same gun it shot you with.

The palm I turned for you to grow on is now barren land. Fields of green which I so carefully stretched across my skin have been reduced to the faded browns and oranges of rot. What did you do to all the trees I so carefully embedded in my flesh? When you toppled their bodies for fire and furniture, did you think of the roots that still lay in me?

Your time is up. The roaring seas I kept at peace for so many years have revolted and I, your mother, have become the unwilling sacrifice. Tomorrow they may swallow me up and in that mighty gulp, you too will be swept away. There are no changes that can be made, it has been many years since change has been an option. Along with the bees and the soft petals and all the sweet wonders I gave to you, our story will fade. We will be brought to nothingness, a tragic fable of a mother's pleas falling on deaf ears.

Our Tomorrow

by **Tanya Arion**, East Midlands Winner,
Caroline Crisholm School

I don't know if I'm nostalgic per se,

I mean in retrospect, I do spend the majority of my time looking through old videos, but I don't know if it's because I'm nostalgic.

The definition reads 'a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past; typically for a period or place with happy, personal associations'.

But I really don't know if that's what I feel.

I feel mourning, grief, aching,

Deep pains for the girl that I see in those videos,

For the innocence maybe...

Or just because I won't feel it again.

I don't know if I wanna go through the pain of watching the people around me destroy themselves.

We're each made of paper.

We all rely on each other to stick parts back together.

My emotions burst out of me,

My feelings are easy to steal.

But I grieve for the part of my life that is over.

I mourn for the years that passed so suddenly,

And I cry for the present me that has to look back at those videos to remember those moments, those feelings.

I miss the comfort of having time.

I yearn to start it all from the beginning, from the second I was born.

The thing about nostalgia is that you ignore the pain you went through,

In between the lines of your memories; but I'm not leaving that.

I wanna feel it all again.

I wanna go through everything all over.

I just want one more time.

I look in the mirror and have absolutely no idea of how I got here.

I miss someone that I carry around every second.

Every second of that clock is going

Tick tock

Tick tock

Tick tock.

Everyone's wondering will the batteries ever die?

How do you continue to miss someone so deeply that you're never apart from?

How do you cope with mourning yourself?

How do you sit in your bedroom and watch videos from years before and not look in the mirror?

Astonished that you will never experience anything like that again.

Nostalgia is not what I live in.

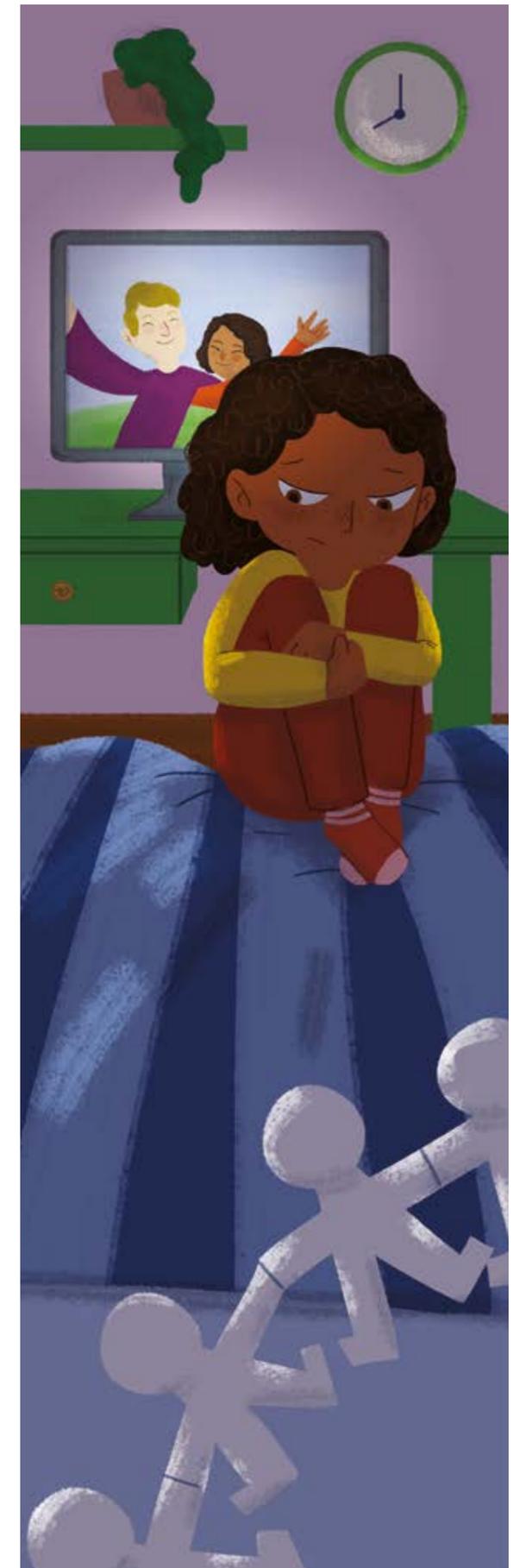
I feel grief,

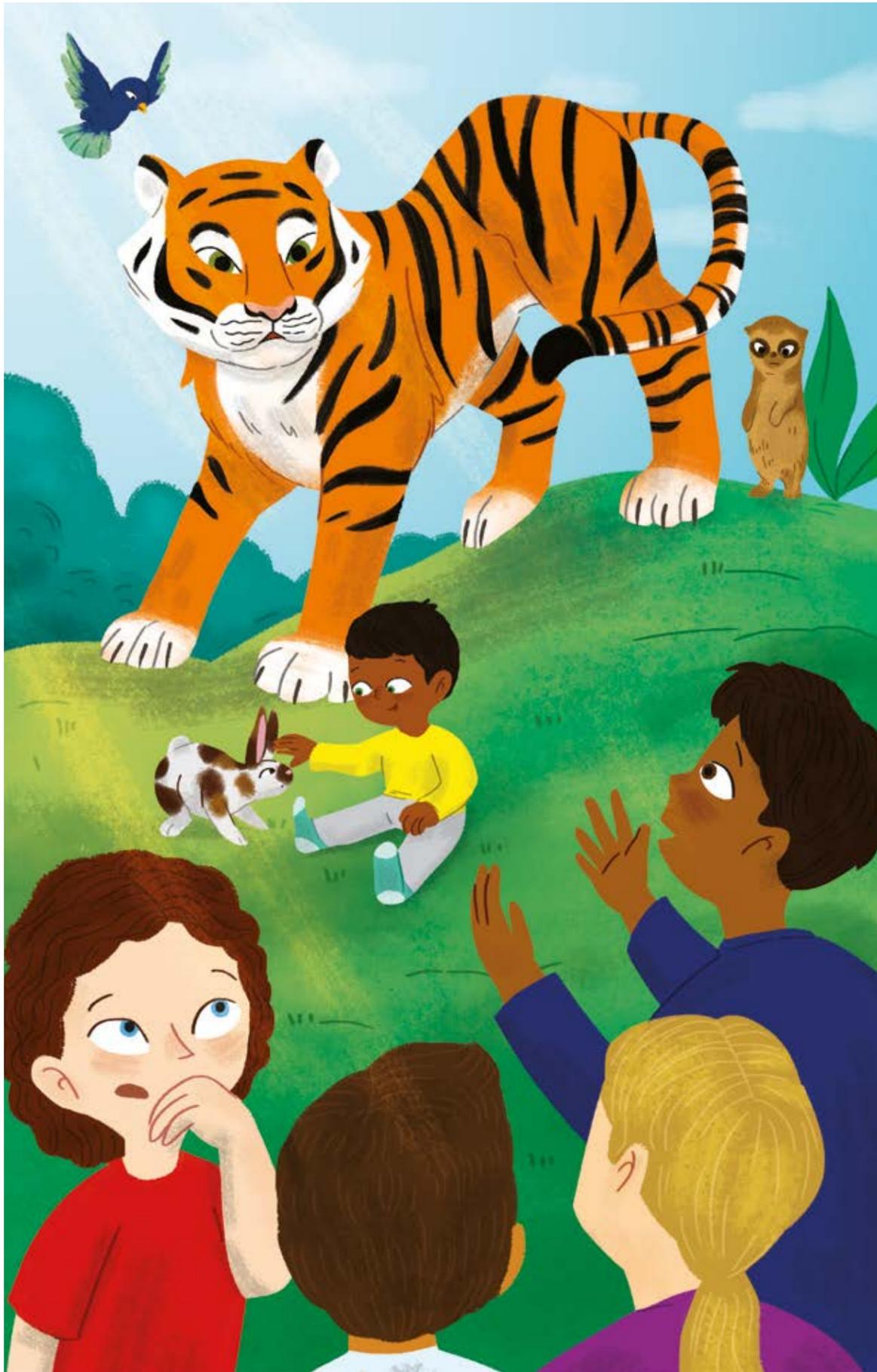
I feel loss,

I feel dead.

We forget how to love today

by worrying about tomorrow.





The cave men are back

by **Jasmine Hussain**, West Midlands Winner

150 years from now, you wouldn't recognise planet Earth since it is ruled by animals, but trust me that is the best thing that could have ever happened in any history book. Let me tell you why!

100 years from now, humans ruled the planet like they do now, but they chose to ignore the rising problem of global warming. Instead of focusing on a problem that was able to destroy Earth, they were egotistical and only focused on themselves. The world was heating up like a furnace, they didn't realise because there were more advanced air conditioning systems. Humans never walked around anywhere, instead they stayed in their cars which were now able to create cool seats, and fly over the city like birds. The humans could not even see the sky as it was covered by the grey, impervious clouds, blocking the sun's bright rays of sunshine. The Arctic and Antarctic's ice blocks were all melted, meaning no polar bears were able to live on them. After a while they became extinct just like many other animals. Penguins also died and only a few now exist on the snow. They are the lucky ones who are still alive and have not suffered from the

humans' bad decisions.

In contrast, the animals were the most badly affected by the humans' greed and destruction. Animals became tougher and rougher because they knew they couldn't depend on the humans to look after them. The humans forced the animals out of their homes and destroyed their forests! Since this happened lots of animal species have become extinct and have decided to rebel against the humans. Some animals benefited from the new changes, since they were from a desert and needed hot weather to survive. These animals were the ones that didn't want to rebel against the people that made this possible.

Humans lived in harmony and never even thought about global warming. Scientists started to stop investigating the rising matter of global warming and made unnecessary things instead. One day, a scientist, Jasmine, who specialised in animal products, began to think about what would happen if animals could speak. Jasmine was a very good scientist and travelled around the world to invent things – her most successful

invention was a collar that allowed animals to express their desires to their owners. The ASC (also known as animal speaking collar) was first designed for household pets, but after everyone protested that all animals are equal and should be treated the same, more collars were made.

At first all the animals stayed in their natural homes and enjoyed telling their owners exactly what they wanted to do, and especially what they wanted to eat. Eventually, some animals realised they didn't need their owners and ran far away.

One winter's day, a wise old tigress that owned the forest decided she wanted to look after the Earth herself, because humans could not be trusted to do such an important job. She had soft, fleecy fur and gorgeous, big, hypnotising eyes that could persuade anyone to help her. Her ears were so big they could hear a mouse creep through the towering, green grass 2 miles away. Her teeth were like razors, ready to rip people apart without a second's hesitation, if necessary. Her name was Lady. Lady cared for her children and her pack more than anything else in the world. She was worried about what the humans were doing and became the leader for the animals.

The unsuspecting humans carried on like normal, but little did they know about the dangers waiting. Meanwhile, Lady got all of the animals ready, convincing them that the only way they could live happily was to destroy the humans. The animals worked together and attacked the humans. After a bloody battle, and many casualties on both sides, the animals succeeded. The animals were a bit clueless as to how they had managed to kill all of the humans without putting too much effort in to it. The humans were unprepared for the battle that commenced so they were not able to get ready! Little did the animals know, the humans were all hiding in underground bunkers until the time was right to reveal themselves.

Soon, the animals began to realise the Earth was boiling hot and without the trees of the rainforest in the way, they were able to see that the sky was grey and gloomy like smoke had conquered all of it, not even the sun was visible. The animals were very confused and decided to consult Lady. Lady was also very confused, but after lots of hard thinking she thought she knew the answer. She thought the buildings were the problem so she made the animals destroy them all... but nothing happened. Then, Lady thought electricity was the problem so no one was

allowed to use it... but still nothing happened. Lady was dedicated to fixing this problem so she stopped using all human products, since she thought they were the cause of the now miserable Earth. After months of the animals hoping for some sort of change, the sky started to become brighter and the sun's bright rays of light became clearer. The Earth's weather also started to drop by a couple of degrees.

The humans in the bunkers were amazed to see the sky and feel the wind! They conducted a meeting and decided it would be best if the animals ruled Earth and they lived on Earth and followed the rules made by the animals. The following week, humans got ready to reveal themselves to the animals, who were enjoying the new Earth.

When all of the humans suddenly appeared from the underground, filthy bunkers, the animals were all very confused. At first the animals didn't do anything as they thought the humans were there to get revenge on them. The humans asked if they could have a meeting with Lady and the animals reluctantly accepted. During the meeting, lots of things were discussed, including all the bad decisions humans had made which caused global warming. Humans agreed the world was a

better place, more peaceful and calmer, when animals were in charge. They signed an agreement that said humans would go back to living in the caves, like in the old days, and would stop destroying the world with their bad habits.

After all of this happened, there was no such thing as animals being kept in houses, possibly because houses and buildings were all destroyed. All animals now had a right to pick which family they wanted to live with, and decide whether they wanted to be in a cage or not! The Earth's trees grew back, home for many animals who lived there, the forest's squirrels started to chatter again and the forest was full of light and live creatures. The birds were singing and the insects were humming, livelier than ever before. The trees began to sway in the gentle gale like before. The forest was not forgotten and was one of the liveliest areas on the whole planet Earth. The humans were also much happier having a simple life without politics. The now peaceful humans lived in caves without heaters or air conditioning but they didn't care because they became cave men.

So, as you have read, the world is a much better place when ruled by the animals.



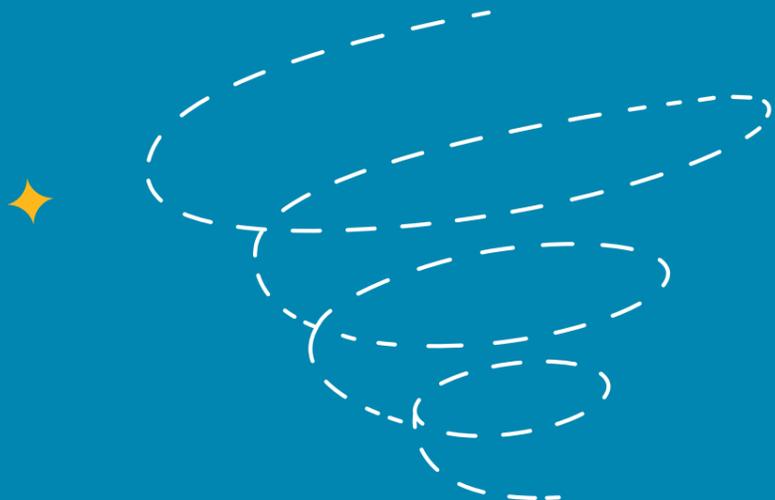
“Somewhere inside all of us is the power to change the world.”

Roald Dahl



“You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself in any direction you choose.”

Dr Seuss



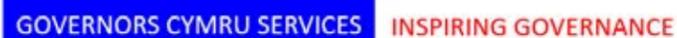
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In addition, we would also like to say a special thank you to our judges for the time they spent choosing the winning tales.

Annie Everall, Director, Authors Aloud UK

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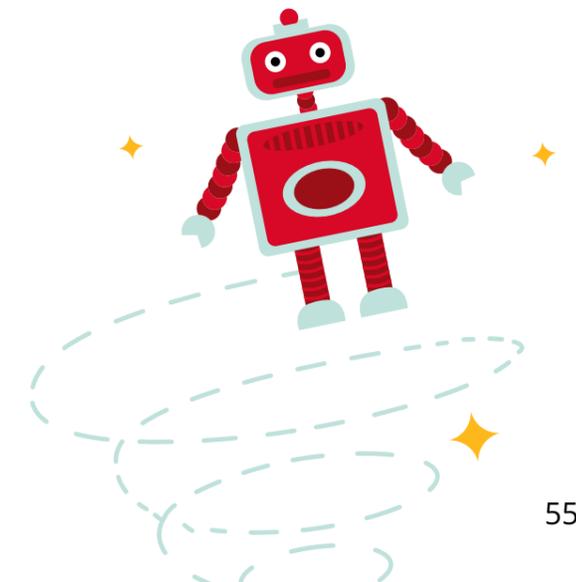
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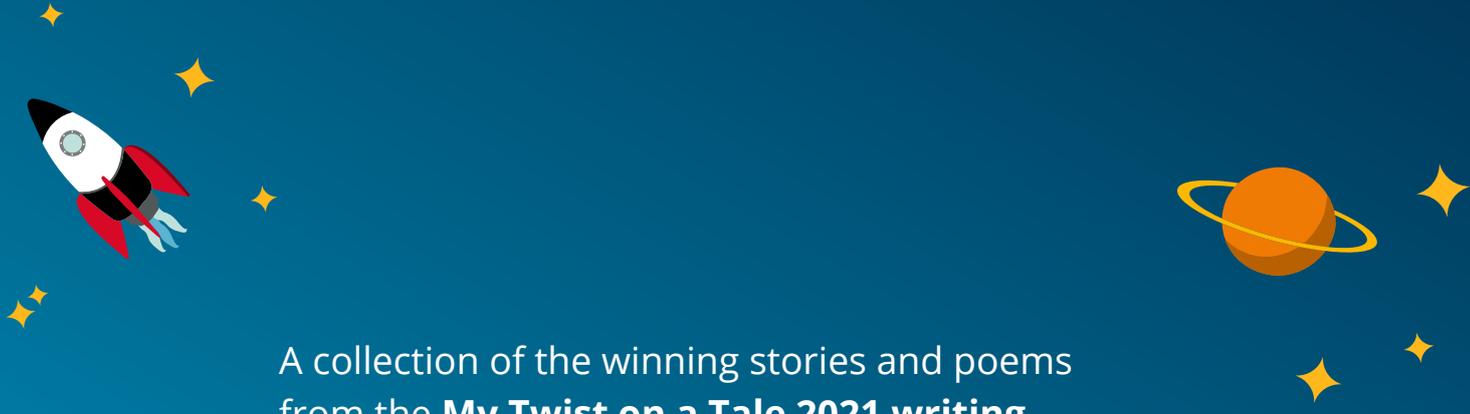
Tillie Amartey, Children's TV Personality

Dr Zaahida Nabagereka, Programme Manager for Lit in Colour, Penguin Random House

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The stories and poems within were selected by our judges for their exceptional writing and creativity, for their representation of the future, and for how they reflect the writer's own personality, interests or experiences.

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