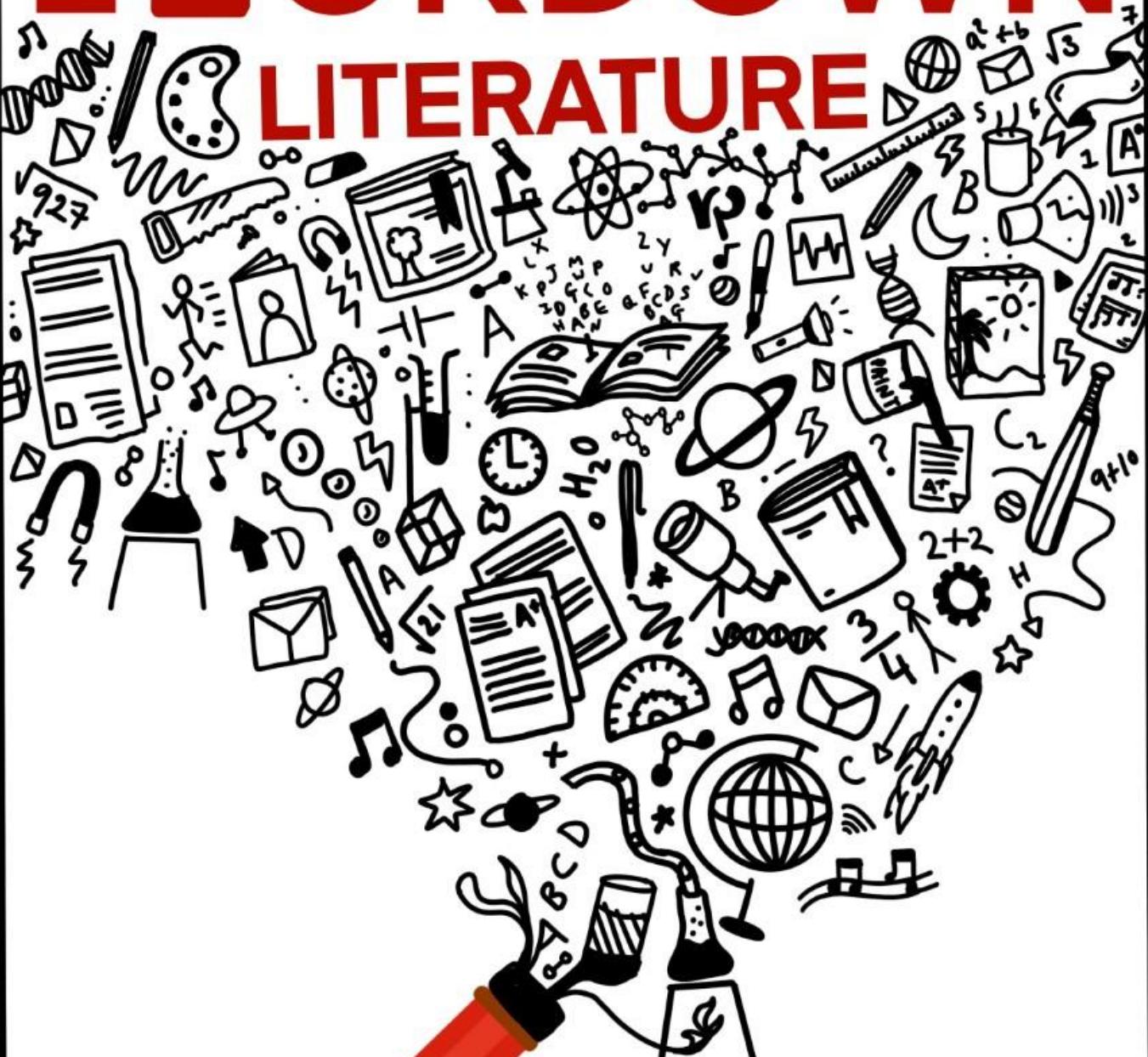


LOCKDOWN LITERATURE



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An Hour's Walk by G Armstrong (Year 13)

Sweet silence, tactile emptiness.
Clouds that drift heavily on high,
Offer marbled protection from the boundless sky.
And between the solemn homes,
Nature's aviators dive directionless.

Times expires, I rise to leave.
Arrowed tracks guide my retreat,
In the clasping tree, singing lovers meet,
And the field remains a hopeful yellow.
But beyond, human lovers grieve.

Still paths of man resisted.
The birds of suburbia remain,
And the choir of silence they sustain.
To the trusted verse of the earth,
Beaks great and small enlisted.

Back, released from the field's embrace.
A bird dives from the crest of its flight,
For today, my eyes' last free sight.
Silent, the paths of man call me back,
To a world of ever-checked space.

Passed the gate, the field's embrace.
Along the arrowed tracks, away
From the path to the expanse of yesterday.
Around, rising rapeseed stands
And beyond, the hill lies unchecked space.

All around, solemn houses; soundless,
The castle-homes of Englishmen,
Whose stout gates will open again,
Stand in quiet solidarity.
Sweet silence, tactile emptiness.

Seen from within or without?
A darting finch bursts on show,
Eternally racing the running hedgerow.
Onwards, to the field's shepherd,
The clasping tree, my mind's redoubt.

A moment's peace, now thought-possessed,
My mind rushes for an answer,
Straining as a river made to flow faster.
Around me, infinite fields of thought,
To fearing this expanse, I confess.

The wind's grass dancers sit with me.
Above, the tree's gaps do frame
The sky's blue canvass, no artist may tame.
To escape earth's deathly hand,
An urge to fly, an urge to flee.

Mixed by R Onyuma (Year 8)

Two different people,
Two different cultures, races and ethnicities
Came together to create me,
Along with my siblings too.

A perfect blend of two
Powerful, knowledgeable and loving backgrounds,
Some small pinches of elsewhere thrown in too
Religions, opinions and nationalities,
All came together to create something new.

My roots are as strong as any other tree
Still pure, connected and true
But instead of only one tree having grown,
They combined planting two

Just like mixing paints,
The shade is both of you.
The heart is a little bigger,
For there is more to love,
More to get to know,
More to explore...

The Natural Disaster of the Blitz by F Robinson (Year 9)

The rumbling earthquake of planes roared overhead,
But this was one tragedy that the meteorologists could not predict,
Bombs whistled towards the ground like cackling witches
The bombs their cauldron, their devastating magic
Which hurled to the ground and blasted the most secure buildings to pieces.
The ghastly Germans did not let off,
The volcanic ash storm pounded down on our roof tops
Like we had been transported back in time to Pompei.

The earth shuddered beneath me as another bomb smashed onto the planet,
Like the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs.
A tsunami of rubble raced towards me as yet another building was hit,
I turned swiftly on my heels as I ran from that great hazard,
Buildings were alight with fire which made it easy to see,
London hasn't seen this much burning since 1666!
Earthquakes, volcano eruptions, tsunamis, they do not compare
To the natural disaster of the Blitz.

The Building by A Turner (Year 9)

The Spires skewer the clouds, turrets reaching upwards, away from what lies below. Grey tiles provide scales, coating the dormant beast. The gloomy sky douses all light and leaves the fortress in a state of eternal dusk. Foreboding. Isolated. Empty. Away from the memory of the busy streets, forgotten is even the idea of outside life. Here, there is only the building. The building and me.

Many have come here, but none have stayed (except me of course) and I intend to keep it that way. Nobody has visited in the past few years because the last visitors came up with some silly ghost story and told it in town after town. If there was a ghost, I would know – after all, I am the one who has lived here all my life. No ghost. Just the building and me.

I gave up on manning the fields a while ago, because it was a lot of effort. I dug up the scarecrows and brought them inside. I liked the company. No good things last, however, and they began to rot. Now the only company I keep is that of the crows, no longer scared away. And the building, of course. I cannot leave because of the people. The people with their accusing gazes. It's like they know me. Know what I've done. I can't cope with their glares and their judging, so I avoid them and they avoid me, and we all go about our lives ignoring each other. Suits me. They leave us alone – the building and me.

I hear the doorbell! I am not sure why they always ring the doorbell, since they do not know I am here, but still it rings.

The keys in the lock.

The creaking of the hinges.

The patter of feet.

The laughter... Dying down... To silence.

It is always the same. A person can create a jovial façade in front of others, but once they step inside the building, they begin to realise their mistake. Some turn tail and run back the way they came, others brave a night but it is still too much for them; others need a little more...encouragement. They are all gone by morning.

They do it for the glory of having stayed in a 'haunted house'. Or for the thrill. Or to try and get a glimpse of this mystical ghost they have invented. Today's lot look like thrill seekers - ten or so teenagers, joking and teasing each other as they barge in and set up camp on the floor. The floor! The floor of all places! The building has countless bedrooms, but no - *the floor will do us nicely. Suit yourselves, that just makes my job easier.*

I step out of the shadows. Only one of them is looking in my way, but it only takes one. She lets out a satisfactorily terrified wail and flees through the open door. The others turn, alerted by her reaction, but I am back in the darkness. Only one sighting per group - that's my one rule (other than never leaving the house, so two rules). They will now run after her with words of incredulity and reassurance, and they will never return.

I watch them go.

It gets lonely here, sometimes. I wish the ghost from their stories existed. I would really like to meet him. Until then, I guess it's still just the building and me.

And you.

The Little Prince by A Daimay (Year 10)

Early morning, golden sun,
Gazing at the horizon,
The blue-green water of the archipelago, Finally here,
memories from long ago.

Joy, happiness, love,
All of what you could have wished for,
A sunshine, that I will never forget,
Always in front of me, a target,
Pushing me to go forward,
Should never look backwards.

Leaving from the midnight sun, Passing over the
Tower of London, Then all along the Africa To
the High Cordillra.

Trying to revive the real adventure,
The real senses, the true fear.
And the fight without a battle,
Nor guns, nor enemy
But a Night Flight with full throttle,
A Dream, an Escape, a Possibility.

It came out from a dream,
For love, passion of flying,
It took off from the land
Of the midnight sun.



Letter from the Envoy by B Smith (Year 10)

This piece was inspired after reading ‘My Last Duchess’ by Robert Browning...

Having arrived at the Duke’s estate I was greeted courteously by his servants. When I finally met the Duke in person, he showed me a portrait of his past wife, or as he referred to her “My last Duchess.” He spoke to me as if I were inferior and not an envoy of the family he was soon going to be united with. He also talked about his Duchess as if she were nothing more than a prized possession, which as he is about to marry your daughter, is a potential point of discussion.

He spoke of her in a way that made me think that he did not truly care about her because he described her as “too soon made glad” and “too easily impressed”. From the way he spoke about the painter, Frà Pandolf, I could tell he was jealous of the time that he had spent with his wife. Later he said, “I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together.” This made me unsure whether he had a hand in the death of his past wife because he did not speak of her in a way that conveyed love and emotion. I heard him speak for many minutes, though he never gave me the chance to talk.

He came across as a power crazed man with an overwhelming sense of social superiority. However, his name and power could be a useful allied tool if you choose to use it.

A Maid's Diary by G Linter (Year 10)

This piece was inspired after reading 'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning...

Dear Diary,

My worst fears have been confirmed; the duchess has died... under suspicious circumstances. Another innocent life has been sacrificed to the likes of the Duke. She now hangs, a mere painting on the wall, as though that was all she was; his possession. She never meant more to him than a married status, and I always feared his seemingly sociopathic tendencies would come crashing down on her, just like the others.

We all live in severe trepidation here, our sole purpose to pander to his every desire. We cower before him, in anticipation of his next belligerent move. I long for the old, contented days when I first served him. It has not always been this way; he was a wonderful child. I saw a softer side to him then, his eyes beamed with wonder and he had a sweet fondness towards animals, it saddens me he allowed power and money to weaken him in this way. However, I must admit, there was always an underlying, undiagnosed anger swarming his blood, a dangerously proprietorial nature infecting his young mind, a sickness with no treatment known to man, a burning desire to own and control all. In fact, if you looked close enough, you could see a spark of fury, a flame of vexation in his pupil when he felt he lost control. Of course, back then we did not worry for him, for after all, he would change. He was merely a lost, young, jealous boy who did not understand the world yet, wasn't he? If only we knew.

There she hangs, hidden by a subduing curtain, for his eyes, and his eyes only. The imposing purple silences the secrets I know she so desperately wanted to share. After all, that is all he ever wanted of her, a silent, beautiful, expensive painting in his home, never to see the light of day. The world will never know. They will never know the way her smile could clear the muggiest of skies. It was the most stunning, innocent smile I have ever seen; a mark of pure joy and optimism in a daunting world, only to be scarred by such a brutal ending, a young life stolen too soon.

For just less than a year, the duration of their marriage, I never slept at all, and I know I would never sleep again if I could just see her once more, for I really felt for her. I felt for all of them, every single one, yet she was somehow... different. She stood out from everyone else. Was it her age? Maybe, for she was so young, so innocent. Was it her past? Most likely. She felt safe with me, able to confide in me, and the feeling was mutual. Around her, I felt an inexplicable comfort, but also intense admiration. However, I often wonder why she told me all she did, for after all, I am just a maid. Nothing more, nothing less; my sole purpose is to serve. I do not matter, and clearly, neither did she. Strange, really, for he had an unusual obsession with her. It fascinated me, the way he would display such an overwhelming possessiveness, such a strong instinct to hide her, and yet, he never shared his insecurities with her; it could have saved her. He was arrogant, he held pride to such a priority that he never just sat and spoke to her. Oh, and the jealousy... the jealousy, this is what ultimately caused this devastation. It is sad to me because I knew the real her, and I knew with no doubt at all that she only had eyes for him, if only he could see that too.

I still struggle to understand, to comprehend, how come things move on? How come horse and cart do not slow when it feels like the end of my world? Still, she is gone now and once again I am left to pick up the pieces and divert suspicion, even my own. I would give my soul if I could ever change God's mind. There's nothing I wouldn't give for more time.

It is my fault really. I will have to live with the guilt. I was one of the few people who knew his true colours, who had seen and felt the force of his spiteful character. I should have warned her... why didn't I warn her? Was there anything I could have said to make her see? I miss her so, and it is me who will be swallowed by the guilt, for she is at peace now. I know there is no more pain now and she won't ever have to suffer but I would give my eyes if I could only see her once more. If I could take her place I would even hesitate. Oh! What I wouldn't give to have her here, and yet, there she hangs...

Elizabeth Smith, the maid

A Servant's Monologue by J Grice (Year 10)

Look, I know I may be a scrawny servant or the way the Duke describes me, a nobody, but the things I see around here, I could unravel some devastating secrets. There are some things that go on here that could damage his reputation. He treats me and the other servants and maids here with no respect and walks right over us. Without us he would be nothing. He was a very controlling man and never liked to be opposed, even by his wife! There were a lot of bad moments between him and his wife. Whenever asked if he killed her, he denies it but we all know what happened. I could never reveal what happened, not even in my own diary for he would find out and who knows what treacherous things he would do to me? You can see that he killed his wife though, just listen to the way he still talks about her, "She looked on, and her looks went everywhere". He is clearly saying that she thought he could never make her happy so she was always looking at other men to see if they could satisfy her, and he knew that. He clearly feels a lot of jealousy and therefore he could not let her do that. He had to keep her even though she despised him, no matter how many gifts he gave her, it was not for love, it was for his own personal gain, so he could control her. It was obvious what the Duke thought about the Duchess, to him she was like a pet who did not like their owner.

Also, the Duke has an arrogance like no other person. He thinks because you have married into his name that therefore you must respect him for that. The fact that he calls it a gift shows his arrogance. He is a very unpredictable man and an extremely dangerous one too. You can never really tell what he is thinking and what he is planning. He has a lot of power and quite often abuses it. He is not a humble man, more of a greedy one based on his wants and his actions. He has been born into privilege and was extremely lucky and anyone who has less wealth than him, he looks down upon with pure disgust. He is also a very selfish man and is always talking about himself, when he should be caring about others.

The Duke's Diary by J Marsh (Year 10)

Dear Diary,

It has been precisely two weeks since the death of my Duchess. The time feels as though it has been elongated into centuries, but I must constantly remind myself to stay calm and in control. Surprisingly, I do not feel as though she is truly dead, if anything, I feel like she has been reborn into who I have always wanted her to be. Although I cannot smell her perfume anymore or hear her voice, I can still gaze at her face, but now she sits still and silent. Her portrait hangs on the wall in front of me as the last surviving part of her. Each brushstroke is so delicate and simple yet all together it makes up a complex and remarkable portrait. Her beauty will forever be framed on my wall.

Her death certainly was a tragedy, but tragedies always happened for a reason. Perhaps her actions led her to her fate. Perhaps if she had behaved herself then she could be sitting beside me instead of on the wall. My Duchess was ungrateful and unloving, and did not deserve everything I gave her. Surely what happened to her was meant to be? She made this happen, she forced it to happen, she forced me to do it.

My father used to tell me that power was all you needed; with power you can control people. Like me, when my father felt weak and vulnerable, his ugly emotions would boil out and usually lead to him doing something abysmal. After, he would deny any of it was his fault, but he knew the truth and so did we.

My last Duchess liked to drag my power away from me like a lioness hauling a deer back to her cubs. Her looks went everywhere, and she was too easily impressed. Did she respect my gift of a nine-hundred-year-old name? Did she appreciate everything I provided for her? Did she value me? The answer is no, and it pushed me to insanity. She made me infuriated and bitter. She gave me no choice!

As always, I should not concentrate on how she used to make me feel. It would be better for me to accept her death and focus on the future. I have a role in society to play and my next duchess is waiting for me.

The Ghost by S Macherla (Year 7)

“Beep, beep, beep, beep” I woke with a jolt tempted to slam the snooze button on my alarm clock. I hadn’t slept a wink these past few days, not with the absurd noises that I could have sworn were coming from Grandma’s room. Lazily I got out of bed and reached for my dressing gown. As I did so, I could hear a muffled voice, which sounded like my mother’s. Swiftly I put on my slippers and headed to where the voices and faint cries were coming from – which was my Grandma’s room. Upon entering the lonely room, my mother, who was sobbing quietly to herself, was holding the frail hands of my Grandma. Instantaneously I knew Grandma was ill. Overwhelmed and anxious, uneasy and insecure, I dragged my jelly – like legs towards Grandma’s bed and comforted her. Quietly Mother left the room not wanting to wake the pale old lady. I could hear her talking to Father about how the doctor had said she had seen something startling and at such an old age she was not likely to live any longer. Tears welled up in my eyes just seeing my Grandma lying on the bed in utter shock. After all I had such a close bond with her. She raised her head and put out her shaky hand in it was a rather small purple box.

“Open it when you hear the voice, and only when you hear the voice”. She said faintly.

Before I could ask any more questions unconsciously Grandma flopped down and that’s when I knew it was the end.

It was a crisp autumn morning and the daylight was seeping through my curtains. Once again I hadn’t got any sleep, I thought that now Grandma had gone it would be easier as it may have been her making the rather strange noises, however this time it sounded like it was coming from my own bedroom. I brushed the thought away and climbed out of my bed. Now that Grandma’s presence was gone the house seemed lonely. I was lonely. Each morning, normally, I would bring up Grandma’s breakfast (cornflakes and an orange and mango smoothie) after she’d eaten we’d talk for hours on end she would always tell me about how ghosts were real, but I knew they definitely were not. When Mother nagged me to do my schoolwork, Grandma would always calm her down and insist I could stay for a while. Although, I treasured the memories they were simply just not there anymore. My thoughts travelled around in circles but always came back to when Grandma had given me the small purple box. I still remember her exact words: “open it when you hear the voice, and only when you hear the voice”. The words played in my mind like a broken record. Over and over again. Surely Grandma was out of her mind. What voice am I supposed to listen out for? One night the thought of opening the small, purple box crept up on me, however I knew I could trust Grandma. I always have. I always will. Even though she may have been talking nonsense, I may as well wait until I supposedly heard ‘the voice’.

“Lauren, come down for dinner”. My Mother’s voice called. Although I wasn’t at all hungry, I decided to come down as after all Mother and Father were upset about Grandma’s death, and the last thing I wanted them doing was worrying about me not eating. On the table lay three nicely polished plates, it hurt that Grandma was not joining us. This was my first dinner without her. It was rather awkward, Father tried asking me about my day, but I just replied “good” as I didn’t really want to start a conversation. Grandma would always lift the spirits and keep us talking. Feeling upset I asked to be excused from the table and I went upstairs. Glumly I got into bed and for the first time I fell straight to sleep. At exactly midnight I awoke to the familiar sound I hear every night, only this time I could hear voices on top of the other noise that I couldn’t seem to explain. Louder and Louder. With that I scrambled out of my bed and approached the door. To my surprise there was no one there but the voices were loud, and I could hear them from outside

my room. Suddenly I could make out what the voices were saying.

“Grandma is always right; Grandma is always right. Open it, open it”. As the voices repeated and grew louder, I became more and more puzzled. Was I in a dream? That’s when it suddenly occurred to me that this was what Grandma was on about ‘The voice’. Feeling insecure I went under my bed covers hoping the noises would be blocked out. I couldn’t escape. The voices are always with me. I was left with no choice. Nervously I approached the white cabinet, where the purple box lay. Reluctantly, I opened the box, not knowing what to expect. Nothing. Nothing was in the box. Slightly relieved, I turned back but out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of illuminous green light. I couldn’t help but look round. Wishing I had never turned around, I was faced to face with what looked like a ghost, but not just any old ghost Grandma’s ghost.

“Come to Evelyn Graveyard! Be there by midnight and learn the truth”. Whispered the ghost.

And before I could ask anything or say anything Grandma disappeared into the darkness, just like she had done when she was handing me the purple box. She left me speechless and astonished. Evelyn Graveyard was where Grandma had been buried. At the mere thought of returning to the graveyard where Grandma was once buried, gave a chill down my spine. Suddenly, my thoughts were interrupted by Father. “Lauren what are you doing up at this hour?” Whispered Father.

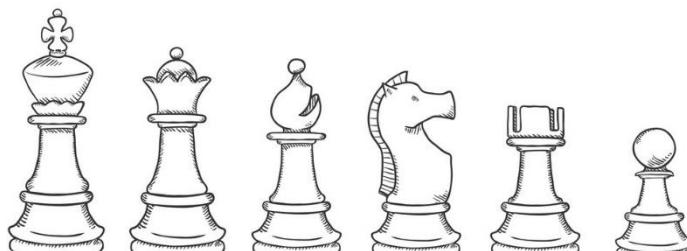
“Umm nothing I couldn’t get to sleep “. I replied slightly overwhelmed at the situation I had just experienced.

“Okay well try and get some rest, you don’t want to be tired tomorrow”. Said Father exhaustedly.

“I certainly don’t”, I said under my breath.

As I went down for breakfast the next morning, I reassured myself that today wasn’t going to be too bad, besides it was only Grandma. She couldn’t hurt me, could she? At the back of my mind I was thinking I should tell Mother and Father, but Grandma would probably hate me for that, she’s always complaining that me and her never get to talk in private. All day I could not keep focus on my schoolwork, and when I did manage to pick up the pencil and write an answer, it seemed to always be wrong. All my thoughts drifted towards what it would be like entering the sinister Graveyard. Finally, when I was tucked into bed, and when my parents did manage to fall asleep, I snuck out leaving a note on my strewn bed saying I went out on an early run – just in case I wasn’t back before morning.

As I hastily ran along the path, excitement rushed through me about supposedly seeing Grandma again and hearing her sweet gentle voice tell me what was going on. Reluctantly, I squeaked open the rather rusty gate, as I did so a jet-black raven squawked a soulless song. The Graveyard gave off a deadly and unwelcoming atmosphere. Just as I was about to turn back, I thought about how desperate Grandma must be. Just as the thought hit me, I carried on the daring journey, so frightened I was surprised I could walk. As my hairs stood on end, I saw the evil shadow of a bat flutter past as if to threaten me. Its eyes darted frantically at me, looking hungry. The raven, once again squawked, as if to give me a warning. “Snap”. I couldn’t hear my heart, and then something or someone touched my shoulder, trembling I bravely turned around my hair spinning in the movement. I wish I hadn’t. Gobsmacked, I knew at once I had learnt the truth. I had learnt it the hard way though. I wasn’t sure how to explain what I had just discovered, but all that came to mind was the game chess.



Havisham by B Tant (Year 9)

My beloved man. Gone for a year.

I wish he was still here.

His chocolate brown eyes looking into mine.

Swept away from me.

I cry so hard my eyes hurt.

I drown in the tears I have shed.

Murder on my mind,

I smash the mirror.

Why did it have to happen?

Gunshots echo in my head.

Blood smeared down the wall,

Forever staying there.

His bed remains untouched,

However, visited every day.

Memories waft around the room,

The aroma of death.

Havisham by E Davis (Year 9)

Why did you leave,
What did I do wrong?
Now I am left to grieve,
I must stay strong.

I loved you with all my heart,
You said you would never leave,
Now look at us, we are worlds apart,
Were you not happy?
I have one thing to say and I will make it snappy,
I love you and I will never stop loving you.

Why did you leave me what did I do?
I have been left to grieve alone in my room,
My heart has been left in pieces,
Broken and cannot be fixed,
The pain increases I am transfixed,
I will get my revenge,
Not today or tomorrow but one day,
You'll know how it feels to be left heartbroken,

My love for you was a mistake,
The love you gave me was fake,
But my heart still aches,
You wanted break, for heaven's sake,
Now I shall not wake

Haunted by R Goodchild (Year 8)

The year is 1748, and I am a 54-year-old man. I was born to two wealthy parents in a large manor, which had been gifted to them by King James VII himself. The manor is located in the dark shores of Inverurie, and it has been shrouded in mystery for almost a thousand years. It was built by a team of workers commissioned by the ill-fated King Indulf the aggressor for his personal use. After he was killed by Vikings at the Battle of Bauds, his ghost has supposedly haunted this house, seeking revenge on its owners. It is because of this that I set out to capture the dark past of the manor, and that of himself, by vanquishing the ghost from the inside of his very own home.

I sit inside shadows of deepest menace, creeping along an unlit corridor. For too long has my kingdom been taken by in by the nasty British, who James VI dared to join for the benefit of the lean excuse of money. I am shamed by him and wish to vanquish his ancestor's nobles as they dared to evaporate my history from benefit of their own. I am not going to stand in the pettiest bereavement for what once was, for I am strong and for I am on the side of the Almighty Lord Arawn, the Druid god for death and revenge.

Pitter Patter Pitter Patter. I am sure of what lies beyond the currently conceived realm of thought, yet am utterly terrorised by the conscience which lies within my other. My mission, as chief historian for the unified kingdom, is to discover the history of this ill-fated place, and find the detail behind that fateful battle. Yet I know what lies behind darkness' clothes, and what is contained within, so must I venture forth to these new horizons of perception and a new view of what the world has dared to make my fate. It advances.

I lay under a thick sheet of armour, protected from my opposer. Nay, it lest not work on my day of demise, but perhaps it may work for me today. I reveal my face, covered in blood and drool and a horrifying grin of exposed flesh and bone. My enemy screams to high heaven as I advance, attempting to plunge my sword into him. Yet he now stands, affronting me in the finest mail, and tells: "What claim do you have upon me and my nobleman status, for when ye dare to plunge upon me, your attacks will simply pass me by"

Although certain of my advancement in this unfortunate predicament, I am still shocked from heel to head of what opposes me. It shrieks: "How dare you oppose me dear mortal who lives by the bloodiest dreams, for I am no ordinary ghostly spectre, for I am a ghastly version of what you are myself. Reach out and touch me, and you will find flesh and bone." Doubting his statement greatly, I reach out, and what meets my hand shocks me more than anything I could have imagined.

I see the weak, quivering figure in front of me, as white of my own dead body. I laugh a laugh of my greatest spirity dreams and state: "Give me the kingdom placed upon me by my fathers, or witness and endless terror worse than you are now." I see him, fainting upon the balcony of my own home, a single hand held to the highest skies, begging the god of which he holds dearest to come and help him now. I shriek a laugh like no other feeling and vanish into the darkest skies to reclaim my kingdom for my fathers.

I lie upon the ground of which I own for hours, failing to comprehend the terror I just saw. A small boy rides up the carriageway, and I gingerly evacuate my horror to meet him upon the porch. He hands me a newspaper before riding along the carriageway towards his residence; I freeze in horror at the news that it contains.

Shrill Cries are heard in the far distance.

Yes Yes YES YES YES. I have reached and overcome the treasonous government, and before me lies the quivering monarch of the country upon which I reside.

I am a King, but yet I feel as if I have no control. How dare my misters abandon me upon the sight of the horror int my presence! I am not a weak, powerless man, for I am King George II, one of the best Monarchs my kingdom has had bestowed upon it inside the realm of remembrance. Yet I lie on the floor, my hands tied behind me, screaming for mercy. The fate of my kingdom looks grimmer than a burnt-out star, screaming for its own life.

A Gothic Tale by F Crawford (Year 7)

It was their first day there. They had to enjoy the experience. Their father entered first, but they had been warned about how haunted this castle was. The family followed him in, none of them believed in ghosts. Why would they? They stepped right in and there was a stunning furniture. Why was everyone telling them how bad it was?

Though that night that thought changed. Slammed doors were heard from the children. But their parents just told them they were dreaming, and they needed to get to bed because it was late. "You're just dreaming. Now get to bed, it's late," their mother told them. The children didn't believe her, they knew they heard something.

They got into bed as the mother and father had told them and began to drift off... BUT then they heard it again, but this time they could hear footsteps coming towards their room. They knew they had to do something and something fast. It stopped before they could do anything. So, they just went to bed like nothing happened.

The next morning at breakfast the children knew they had to warn their parents even if they didn't believe them, and they didn't. They just told them to stop being silly. As the day began to drift away the noises started happening again. This time you could hear it everywhere you went. Most importantly their parents heard it all. They called their children down and told them they were sorry for not believing them. They had only been there for 2 out of 10 days and they had to enjoy it.

So, they stayed but agreed to leave if it got any worse in the next 5 days.

It didn't get any better during those days, but it didn't get worse.

That night they heard the door to the kitchen open. They knew it was the kitchen because ever since they went in there it creaked all the time. Then they heard all the pots and pans crash to the floor. Their father told them to stay put whilst he went to investigate. He went down as quiet as possible, with the noise getting louder and louder. And then he saw... GHOSTS. He ran back up to the family to tell them they had to get out of the house as fast as possible. So, they packed up and then they heard the footsteps coming up the stairs, so they ran out and down to the front door of the castle. Then they slammed the door shut and went. But when they looked back the door was open, and the ghosts were following them.

They now know why everyone was warning them not to go into the haunted castle. They now know they should have listened to them and not gone in the first place. At the beginning they didn't believe in ghosts but now they saw one they are scared to go back to that haunted castle.

Elephant by C Holton (Year 9)

After a long sweltering day, it settled down by the river.
Exhausted, thirsty, bored.
it closed its eyes, long grey eyelashes flickered, the bugs irritating it.

Its broken tusks staring at me.
tortured by poachers.
what did they do to deserve it?
greedy hunters, thirsty for money.

the trunk, lifeless just lying there trying to relax.
i thought to myself.
how much does the monster weigh,
they say its as heavy as nearly 100 humans.

powerful enough to kill us but yet we admire them with great respect.
many of us go and visit them, whether it's in the wild or the zoo.

Its big ears flap in a humungous effort to keep it cool.
It moved, stood up and stomped over to the mud patch,
cool as ice, it rolled around.

Desperate to keep cool in the African heat.
the amount of water it guzzled from the river baffles me.
where do they store it all?
spraying it all over themselves, refreshing.
This beautiful animal blows my mind.

Beast by T Attenborough (Year 9)

Like no other I stand above all at the top of the mountain as night comes near, staring wickedly down with all power in my palm. As the sun dims and the moon devilishly rises my veins become nimble, scared in fact and there is no sophistry about it. Jealously is the only emotion. The moon had power over everyone at night, even me as it towered above everyone. My eyes would gently close and I would bellow to the moon to try and not only try to threaten it but the worthless villages below and this gave me menacing confidence as I could feel the humans' fear.

My manners would tear off my head as that night the satisfying dream was under my skin as I had the power to kill where I please because it is all mine. My heart feared nothing, and it was not to be changed. Me and MY pack galloped and sprinted towards the village but with all intend to... Kill.

The Bottle by G Brinkworth (Year 9)

This piece was inspired after reading ‘The Laboratory’ by Robert Browning...

Laughter and smiles all around the room,
Awfully happy for the precious bride and groom.
“Darling, please offer our guests some drinks”,
Says mother: I leave the room in a blink.

Yes, the bride and groom so precious,
Our parent’s loving gaze, I guess I’m jealous.
Me, second best, the disappointment,
While that stuck-up brat gets all attention.

I hate how she looks down at me,
Like I’m just a small twig on the family tree.
I hate how she gets everything,
Clothes, money, a husband... so everything!

How do I deal with this much longer?
Unless I just like... get rid of her?
That’s not an option, though it is.
Rat poison – arsenic, sits above the sink.

No, I can’t do it, she’s my sister right?
I’m supposed to love her day and night.
It’s her wedding next week, biggest day of her life,
I’m supposed to be happy, show pride and blithe.

But I reach and grip the bottle in my hand,
I think of our parents, maybe they’ll understand?
One small drop in her milky tea,
I’m just a selfish human, not crazy.

I walk back in, nobody bats an eye,
“Coffee for you, you, you, and tea for the bride.”
Nearly all eyes on me, here comes my spotlight.
‘The poor bereaved daughter,’ my bark contrary to my bite.

Underneath by N Franklin (Year 8)

It was summer of 1957 and a Danish couple called Mr and Mrs Damgaard were days away from moving into their new house in Dundee, Scotland. Mr and Mrs Damgaard had lived in Denmark together for 10 years at the time and had a very happy marriage. Mr Kaj had spent his life working as a plasterer and a carpenter, so he knew his way around a workshop. Whereas, Mrs Freja Damgaard has been moving from occupation to occupation and has been working as a fashion designer. In May 1957, Freja received a letter from her company saying that their branch in Scotland wanted her to be the leading director of the project and so she and her husband would have to move away to Scotland for an undisclosed amount of time. It was a no brainer for the couple; they would be receiving double the amount of money they usually would and could go and live in a big house in Scotland. So, the next week, they flew out to Scotland and started searching for houses in Dundee, where Freja would be based whilst working on the job. After looking for less than a day, they found the perfect house on top of a hill that looked over many beautiful lochs.

A couple of weeks into living in the house, Mr. Damgaard felt like he wanted to change the interior of his house and as he was a carpenter and plasterer, he felt like he would be capable of doing this for himself. He went to the shop and bought some plaster and wallpaper and started to prepare to renovate the inside of some of the rooms in the house. The first thing that he did was strip the wall plaster and paper from every room in the house. But on the last room, when Mr Damgaard was near finishing his job, he began to see a very long list of names and dates running down the whole side of one of the walls in the room. The dates dated back for one thousand years and after counting and inspecting the dates, Mr and Mrs Damgaard realised that every year, on the 10th of July, these dates had been recorded. That date was coming up in 5 days' time. The most chilling thing about all of this is that, next to the dates there were some words written in red ink on the wall. They looked like they had been scratched on. The words read: 'Don't worry, you're next.' This frightened the couple and for the next four days, things began to happen in the house that had never happened before.

Things were randomly turning up in places where they hadn't been left. The couple were hearing clanging noises in the middle of the night coming from downstairs. The authorities just brushed it off and said it was nothing to worry about - the couple believed that it was something much more sinister. The days went by with the couple trying their hardest to dismiss the somewhat paranormal activity that was happening around them. Then the day came, Wednesday 10th July. The couple waited for a long time for something to happen. Seconds turned to minutes; minutes turned to hours when out of nowhere, the door slammed open and smashed against the wall. A huge luminous white figure walked in the room, with what looked like blood splattered all over himself. He walked over to the couple who feared that this would be the end and grabbed them by their necks. Beneath their screaming, the Damgaards heard the figure say, 'I did warn you,' and then he burst into a fit of cackling and laughter.

The Damgaards were found days later, lying peacefully in bed, by the police. When they turned the bodies around, the couple had no hands, no feet and their faces had been scolded with white hot water. Their tongues were no longer in their mouths but had been stitched onto their right arms and next to the bed was a message written in blood saying: 'It wasn't my fault; it's not as if they weren't warned.'

Hatred by I Laing (Year 9)

I HATE YOU I HATE YOU
I HATE YOU I HATE YOU
I HATE YOU

*This piece was inspired after reading
'The Laboratory' by Robert Browning...*

I'm not crazy you are
Why do people call me crazy?
I'm not thinking of murder you are

ring *ring*
Pick up the phone
ring *ring*
PICK UP THE PHONE

Door opens, trubble
The witch is home
And now i am not alone

Don't go
Of again so soon
Don't go

To quick
No fun
She is already dead

She was week
All i did was hit her once
Bang the witch is dead

Don't go
I'm not crazy you are
Door opens, trubble

Don't go
Don't go
Please

To slow
Don't go
No fun

The Ocean by J Field (Year 10)

Beneath the Earth's crust, powerful incantations murmur, rousing the silent deep that lies above. Dark shoals of fish dart like driving rain, disturbed. Once dormant, now driven in a frenzy. Waters shift and ripples begin to appear on the surface. Crests of white lengthen and fall. Beneath them, arcing in swathes, Neptune holds his trident and waves it first one way and then the other in a figure of eight. This causes eddies and whirlpools to twist and turn in the green-blue translucent sea.

As the shock waves multiply and the water darkens further from blue to green to grey, Neptune's omnipotent power unleashes an almighty increase of pressure. The lurking depths of the ocean rise and rise and rise. The wave grows in height blocking out the sun and denying the world of its last sunrise before destruction rains down.

Then the water itself and its many forms sucks back, separating land from sea. The people waiting on the shore watch in awe as the water recedes; leaving fish wiggling on the dark wet sand, flashing silver as their bellies squirm this way and that.

Three sounds: a call, a shout, a whistle. People scatter, running to safety on dry, high land as suddenly the turbulent inrush of breakers swarm in like wild horses. Spurred on by the sea god's trident, they gallop up the shore - salt sodden, once awash with life, but now empty.

The tsunami strikes but the people are safe. The ocean, as it returns empty handed, dares not meet the eyes of Neptune. Silently it carries on, gentle movements lapping at the laughing shores.

The Bomb by I Cork (Year 9)

Quietly everyone awaits, silent like a bat

No talking, moving or shooting

And then the bomb

Suddenly the riot squads race into the battle fields

Guns, stabbing, bombing the sound of death

I was trying to put my finger on the trigger

But it kept pulling away

Why can't I shoot? My finger is punctuated

I know what to do - gun to my shoulder, aim and then-

I fall to the ground

Why couldn't I fight? Push the trigger? Kill

A fusillade of question marks

Silence by N Mehra (Year 9)

Silence...everything was as still as a scarecrow.

The two sides impatiently waiting-

For the signal.

Ellipsis left the room silent.

Fight! Exclamations marks hit the atmosphere

Bouncing over all surfaces.

Gunshots; gas and grenades

Hammering the heroism down.

Nowhere to go – full stops.

Escaping was a luxury.

Interrogation and Improvisation

Nothing could predict the war.

Machines guns; Shotguns. Mayhem

Lifeless bodies crawling away,

Death was around us and it was here to stay.

Silence again...the atmosphere as still as a scarecrow.

War by L Diculescu (Year 9)

Being a Jew in WW2- in a concentration camp

Like never before, I was being thrown about across the cage I was in.

That in itself was torture, but the style of mentality was far worse.

Streets were evacuated, the unknown maze of shops and homes gone.

I debated who the blame was put on for the atrocities.

I could only re-call a name I had heard- Adolf Hitler.

I dared not speak his name aloud for the dear that his hatred would consume me.

Explosions, the least of my worries.

Why was I here? I was different- and I was being mercilessly punished for it.

Their screams filled my thoughts as they burned.

Our sins would go away if we were burned.

Isn't that so?

The Ocean by Z Bruzas (Year 10)

Flying high, I peer over the side of my plane and I am in awe. Below me is the most prepossessing yet menacing thing known to man: the ocean.

As I pass over, its waves smile at me, gleaming. Silent, the water dances in a figure of eight, performing to the hum of my engine.

But I know this natural phenomenon can be far from inspiring. Like an army, it advances as one, firing against the rocks and weakening its hold on land. Commanded by the wind, it defeats every other mighty warrior: fire; earth; and even mankind.

Enraptured, it could tear apart ships, flatten communities and engulf entire islands whole.

But the ocean is also a veil; a layer between land and an ecosystem we yearn to discover. Beneath its murky exterior, a kaleidoscope of colour where predators stealthily seek their prey. This underworld provides not just for sharks and killer whales, but it gives a source of food, water and income to man.

Continuing to fly over the vast body of water below me, I find myself grief-stricken by the sight that is plaguing the sea. Tainting the natural beauty, plastic seeped through every crack in the water's surface. Like a scab, bottles and toiletries and boxes collected in a heap, floating idly above the ocean, pushing down on the ocean.

Violence by B Rahman (Year 9)

Sporadically they came a flurry of panic came upon me

Explosion after explosion words coming and going

Leaving and entering

Fear power destruction all these layers came together

Forming a façade a way for me to run

A way for me to pretend that I was gone

CRRRKKK

In front of me stood a beast of metal

With nuts and bolts. A fount of broken type

A large exclamation mark staring at me moving nought

Fighting was futile

Moving could be volatile

What choice did I have but to stay immobile

Confusion by I Glennie (Year 9)

I close my eyes. I don't breathe. I lose sensation. BANG! Another gun shot. Tears are building up in my eyes and I can't see much but all I know is the I need to escape.

I start to run. As soon as I get my sight back, I bump into this man; anger and hatred on his face and he's holding a brick. What if he throws it at me? But he didn't he just went back to chanting and throwing anything he could find.

BANG! He drops. He is moaning and calling for help so I decide to carry him into one of the deserted buildings. But as I reach a safe shelter his body stiffens. There's nothing behind his eyes it's just blank. I cover him up with a blanket and make my way out to the impact zone.

As I'm running, I see people's disappointed faces haunt me. I assume it's because I'm not fighting. But how could I after what I've just seen, I don't want to see any more deaths, I just want it to stop. WHY CAN'T IT STOP!

I pass unrecognisable streets and buildings even though I know where I am. I try to map out my route in my head but I just can't concentrate and my mind is stuttering. All the memories just come back to me. When me and my friends went to the local ice cream shop every Friday and we would always make sure we'd get as much ice cream as possible. When me and my parents went for a day at the beach even when there was a storm because the water was just so warm. I miss it. It will never be the same again.

It feels like I've been running for hours when I decide to take a break. I make sure the gun shots are just a tiny sound in the distance. I feel my eyelids getting heavier and eventually I fall asleep. When I wake up, I just briefly see the luminescent sun before it's devoured by clouds. The gun shots are getting closer but are less frequent so I can't decide if that's a good thing or not. I slowly get up and start to jog rather than run and waste my energy.

I know where I'm going. I'm going to see my parents they told me to leave and go to the end of town; they told me it will be safe there. Well I'm here. Just as I was about to step out of the alleyway, I saw a line of guards and a massive crowd still hurtling metal, bricks, anything they could find at them.

BANG! I'm stuck. I'm confused. I roll up into a ball and weep. What's my name?

Where do I come from? Where am I going? I don't know.

Bloody Sunday by O Datta (Year 9)

Peace extinguished like a spark in a gale,
The final clutch at redemption has failed.
You will cross this bloody river,
And at your feet, peace shall wither.
Self appointed judgment falls,
Dying cries will ring and call.

Carry you message through the resistance,
Let the bleeding ground speak our sermon.
Preach and teach through your violence
Because the future of others is yours to determine.
But when those who loved those who died come knocking at your door,
Will you face them with those guns or will you cower on the floor?

**'Broken bottles under children's feet
Bodies strewn across the dead end street
But I won't heed the battle call
It puts my back up
Puts my back up against the wall
Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday
Sunday, Bloody Sunday, Sunday, Bloody Sunday' - U2**

Why? by A Ford (Year 9)

Him, why did they?
Why did they take him?
Out of everyone they chose him,
As their next victim.

They chased him to the lake,
As they ran through the trees.
They shouted,
Stop, and Freeze!

They pushed him on the ice,
As he fell to the ground.
He let out a scream,
But they just let him drown.

As my brother lays there,
Under the lake frozen.
The rest of us stay here
Broken.

Once a year his birthday comes around.
But we don't celebrate.
We sit in silence and stare at the ground.

Whist tears well up inside us,
Poised to over spill.
We know the gap he leaves,
The shoes are too big to fill.

An Alternative Ending to the Canterville Ghost by J Moss (Year 8)

Two weeks after the honeymoon Virginia's curiosity got the better of her and she decided to open up the jewel box. She did it in the library, hidden away, as she knew that Lord Canterville would try to persuade her to allow him to sell the jewel from the box in Boston. She opened the box nervously but excitedly like a child on Christmas morning expecting to find pearls rubies and colourful gems that shimmer like stars in the night sky, but to her surprise, this was not the case. An old yellowing piece of paper sat folded neatly at the bottom of the box. Anger coursed through her veins knowing that Lord Canterville had already taken the jewellery, but as she picked up the piece of paper she could see faint letters through it. She opened it up and straight away she realised it was addressed to her although the writing was extremely scruffy.

Dear Virginia,

I hope your wedding went as planned and that you had a nice honeymoon. Sorry that there are no jewels in this box, I hope I haven't disappointed you, it was just I needed a way to get this letter to you without anyone seeing it; especially those horrid brothers of yours. Thank you so much for praying for me and asking the angel of death for forgiveness, it was so brave and you have cleansed my soul. I know what I am about to say may seem unforgiveable and hard to comprehend but the Angel of Death has given me another chance at life. He has said "If your saviour kills her first born child in the secret garden by the Canterville house you can live for 15 years more in human form. You will have total freedom, but the way in which you live these 15 years will decide your fate; Heaven or Hell". I promise that I will repay you in some way Virginia, Just trust me.

Yours truly The Canterville Ghost.

Her mind raced at a million miles per hour. She felt like she had a lump in her throat and was gasping for air. She wished she had never opened the box in the first place and now felt so helpless.

Sure enough, the time came around where the Duke and Virginia had their first baby, a beautiful girl named Rosana. Virginia had not told her husband anything about the letter she had received from the Canterville Ghost as she was extremely adamant that she would not give away her baby away. That was until later that night when her good heart got the best of her and she started to think differently. She could always have more children, but the Canterville ghosts could never get a chance at life again. She knew he was deep down a caring ghost, but his personality had been distorted into something he's not. Without thinking, she grabbed Rosana and ran down to the secret garden. She lay the helpless child on the damp grass and tightly grasped the child's neck in the attempt to strangle her. The child let out a loud scream before her breath was taken away. Virginia wept but out of nowhere came a loud laugh. Not a laugh of joy, but a sinister, malicious laugh. There stood the Canterville Ghost in human form, more vivid than before.

"Oh you fool!" he announced. "I have not come back to redeem myself, I have come back for revenge!"

"Revenge on your twin brothers!"

A Gothic Story by M Burbury (Year 7)

The trees creaked in the wind, the night wasn't over yet the storm still raged and screamed. The old manor on the hill was taking a battering with its windows boarded up and the grass overgrown (on what used to be a perfectly cut garden). The ancient house had been used as a hunting lodge until that fateful night in 1902.

The storm had been there too, but it was different then, younger. Head lights loomed in the distance. The car had pulled up the driveway, the monster was lurking in the shadows of an oak tree. In a matter of seconds, the behemoth had jumped from behind the tree and struck, the children screamed as they saw the beast.

The children ran up to the house, but the door was locked, without looking behind her the youngest could tell the monster was close. She didn't want to turn around for fear she might see her parent's bodies lying on the floor hurt or worse... But too late, she was struck from behind, the other two children turned and saw the youngest child dangling from her feet. What could they do to help her? Should they run and leave the child? Instinctively deciding together, they ran at the beast, the girl fell out of the monster's grip and plummeted to the floor. CRACK! The splitting noise whipped at the silent night like gunshot. The girl was lying on the floor either too pained to move or unconscious.

The monster turned, a gash ran down the length of its face. The boy, the oldest by the looks of him, was holding a piece of metal that he had taken from the floor. "NO" but too late, the eldest boy was swept off his feet. He smashed into the door of the house and fell to the ground, the door creaked and fell on top of him. The middle child was alone, she ran to the door, jumped over her brother and fell through the doorway. She scrambled to her feet and ran up the stairs the monster right behind her. How long could she outrun him?

She clambered over the threshold into a room as bright as the sun. She thought to herself this can't be right, it is night-time. She walked around the room before remembering... the monster. She turned so fast she cricked her neck. There he was watching her leaning against the doorway. She was trapped for sure. Could she make it out of the window? She could smell his putrid breath on the back of her neck.

The girl hadn't been seen since that night. The family had woken up in a hospital three days later but the girl (Sam they called her) was never found. Her older brother Jack was the last known "person" to see her alive.

The London police had been searching for her for 6 years after the night, no one was successful, after that they had given up hope and moved on with their lives. Including the family. But Jack and Chloe had not given up hope of finding their sister.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE FUTURE... The case of the missing girl hasn't gone quietly around these parts, nobody had been in the house since the London police, a hundred years ago. Her body had not been recovered. But there had been many telltale signs of the monster. Mostly around the hunting lodge and there had been screams coming from the house but when, the local police got there the screams had subsided and the person was nowhere to be seen.

Jack and Chloe's children had believed it was their late aunt. But it couldn't have been she was probably dead by now and the monster had probably eaten her corpse. But what if...?

The Night of the Escape by R Flaxbeard (Year 8)

Last Friday, Mr and Mrs Cackle went to their local grocers. ‘What would you like to get for tea?’ Mr Cackle said to his wife who was absent-mindedly staring deep into the heart of the shop. It was a bit of a run-down place; paint peeled slowly off the walls gathering in clumps on the floor, gathering dust as no one wished to touch the contents nesting within these capsules. Townsend was once a happy place but long ago a fire started in the town centre and burned down almost all the houses in the town. This was because the town’s Firefighters were under attack from unknown forces, but no one ever believed them; it was just an excuse for a coffee break. Mrs Cackle walked up to the shopkeeper and asked him if he had any stock in, and he replied in a gravelly and hoarse voice: ‘Yes, had some in yesterday I did but a little small they are.’ Mrs Cackle decided that it would have to do so she paid the shopkeeper and thanked him kindly. She had bought two carrots, a cabbage, one broccoli and three Brussels sprouts. With this measly portion of veg she decided, that if that was all she could get, some tiny vegetables – she would plant them.

Boarding their horse drawn carriage they rode along the bumpy fields of crops, admiring the view of the countryside. The trees swaying in the afternoon breeze and birds overhead calling for a mate. As their manor came into sight a crack of thunder shook the skies and the poor horse frightened out of its wits fled dragging the carriage, rising up and down as it flew over the ground, crashing through their freshly trimmed hedge and skidding to a halt outside the stables. The couple, unsure as what to do next, wobbled down their path to their grand oak front door which stood 7 metres tall, gazing down on you like the walls of a castle. Still thoroughly shaken the pair walked down the hallway absorbing the features of their manor, which they still had never seen as they were not the true owners of the manor but the only ones alive.

Many years ago, just before the big fall - as everyone now called it - the house was owned by a man called Lord Bill. But under unknown circumstances Lord Bill fled his home hours before the fire started. After this, the Cackles, being the only three survivors, decided to ‘keep the house tidy’ for the Lord until he returned. Living with the Cackles was James Cackle who, as a baby at the time of the ‘big fall’, was now 13 and longed to be an explorer – he loved to explore the grand manor.

Later that day, as the storm started to subside Mrs Cackle decided to retire outside to their patio to relax and plant the vegetables. Being uneducated, she was unaware of very little in the world apart from money and... well, money. She chose a nice spot next to their central back door which, as she looked up, decided would be a good spot, as there was nothing protruding out of the wall and would look good on either side of the door. The manor as many are, was immeasurably big and anything looked small next to it. Placing four small plastic pots either side of the grand oak door - shorter than the main door, but still tall - she added some dirt, a little bit of water to the pot with the vegetables, and presently retired to her quarters.

James, however, was still full of energy and stayed awake to explore a bit more. He had found a new passage today that led him to an untouched side of the manor. At midnight he set off. He walked down the pest-ridden corridor to a small compartment in the floor that creaked whenever you walked on it. Descending through, James presently found himself in a store cupboard presumably for the gardener, who had recently left the household after a trip to see his family.

Spotting some fertilizer that said ‘Helps Plants Grow and Keeps Them Happy’, James decided to pick it up as a gift from his adventure, to give to Mrs Cackle as he knew she was trying to make her vegetables grow bigger.

On the way back James spotted a piece of oversized broccoli lying on the floor, with a strange line curving downwards on it, and although having the grudge as all kids do against green stuff he decided to give it a bit of fertilizer to make it happy, and move on as fast as he could. As he ran off though he swore that the line started to move upwards in a smile but shook it off as his tired eyes playing tricks on him.

The next day, James and his mother Mrs Cackle went outside to find to their surprise that one of the four pots had been knocked over and was now empty of its broccoli contents. Remembering, his finding of the fertilizer last night he decided to give it to his mum. ‘Mother,’ he said. ‘Last night I found this fertilizer stuff that says it makes plants happy,’ do you want to try some on your plants?’ he asked.

No, replied Mrs Cackle. ‘Why would I do that if all they need to do is grow?’ she said with no remorse. Sad that his gift had been rejected, he slumped back inside and onto his bed to think of a new place to explore and keep his mind off his irritation and sadness.

Meanwhile, in his bedroom Mr. Cackle had some of his own problems to deal with, as somehow a mutant broccoli had snuck into his room and was now attempting to pin him to the floor. Unbeknownst to him however, this mysterious attack was only the first. Angry and enraged with the humiliation of being beaten by a vegetable, he pulled out a pistol from his arsenal and fired a shot... The house shook and the broccoli ran through the door and out into the fields, away from the house.

The next day, the same occurrence happened again but this time it was not broccoli but two carrots. This continued for many days and, once each vegetable that Mrs. Cackle had planted had risen from its dirty grave, and declared war against Mr. Cackle, they decided to turn to Mrs. Cackle. One day they succeeded in beating her off and ran off through the thunder and lightning of the biggest storm ever seen in the parts of Townsend.

One day, however on one of his adventures James stumbled upon the same broccoli that he had seen before this whole fiasco had started. Slowly, advancing upon it he decided to give it some of the fertilizer, and ask it what or who it was, and ask it why it was doing what it was doing. In reply, the broccoli said: ‘Many years ago, my kind was plentiful, we were loved for what we could give, and were grown in the fields outside ‘your’ manor, but one day our carer went away to see his family, but we saw as he urged his horse onwards a small shiny thing fly out of a window and knock him off his horse. The shooter Mr. Cackle, for that was who I found it was, then went to clear up the evidence.’

Awestruck at the information, James fell back and started to cry. But suddenly the broccoli said: ‘But they are not the owners of this manor either. As you might have realised, they look nothing like you. Your father was the Lord Bill, but he was impaled by a shiny thing on the day of the big fall.’

James then picked up the broccoli (as it had not quite grown too big to hold-yet) and presently, ran out the front door. Running, across the fields James found the other vegetables standing/ sitting in a circle around a corpse of the gardener.

The next day, James entered the house with his new friends and within the hour, the rightful owner of the manor was restored and Townsend with it.

Harbour Ville Manor by M Graham (Year 8)

Many people had once lived in Harbour Ville Manor. It was a house full of joy and laughter. Sparrows would soar high above the house in the clear blue sky-for the sky was always clear in Harbour Ville Manor. That was until one dreadful day in 1874...

The family who were living there were the Reynold family. Mr Reynold was a large, boisterous fellow who could lift any spirit. He owned a popular factory called Reynold's Remedies which sold millions of medicines and treatments. Mrs Reynold was a glamourous but snooty woman who lounged on her cream sofa all day and didn't really bother much with her children. Arthur (Arty) Reynold was the oldest of the Reynold children. He was to inherit the family business so, therefore, in his parents' eyes he was the favourite. He was a charming young man and he got on very well with each of his siblings, knowing exactly how to please them both. To everyone's eyes he was a perfect heir. Elizabeth Reynold was the second oldest of the Reynold children. She had light, blonde hair and was very glamourous just like her mother, however, she had a very sharp mind and the kindest heart of all the Reynolds. Lastly of the Reynolds children was William Reynold. He was the youngest and by far the naughtiest. He always told lies and was forever getting into mischief. He was the spitting image of his father, very plump and rosy cheeked. The Reynold family were an interesting family but little did they know that they were to be the family who started the horrors at Harbour Ville Manor...

They had been living at the Manor for a few months when the first incident happened. They were gathered around the table when suddenly Mr Reynold announced he needed to rest in his bedchamber. This was a normal event so the family thought nothing of it and he left quietly while they continued with their meal. He returned looking rather pale, however, a few minutes later.

"Charles dear are you ok? You look rather pale; did you have a lie down?" Mrs Reynolds said calmly. However, he was not paying attention to her he was staring into the distance a look of horror on his face.

"Charles? I say are you ok?", she repeated.

Coming to his senses, Mr Reynolds turned to look at her as calmly as he could, "Yes my dear I'm fine".

"Good, well maybe you should go back to rest?"

"Ah yes I shall," he obediently replied.

He walked out of the room as normally as he could manage. Little did his family know that he had just witnessed a sight he had never thought he would see again. He couldn't quite believe it. It couldn't be but it was. The faded body of his younger brother. The younger brother that he had killed...

Alternative ending

They had been living at the Manor for a few months when the first incident happened. They were gathered around the table eating their evening meal in silence. Arthur was trying to make conversation but everyone seemed lost in their own thoughts. Then they heard it. A high-pitched shriek coming from above them. The household servants all rushed in at once

looking deeply concerned. Everyone looked about to see who had screamed yet they all knew deep inside that it had come from upstairs. Upstairs which was empty...

They all went up the grand marble staircase not knowing whether to rush or be afraid. Everyone was eager yet hesitant to find what was awaiting them. They searched each room thoroughly for the source of the scream but no one was to be found. Suddenly one of the servants rushed towards Mr Reynold in panic. "Mr Reynold sir! Mr Reynold!"

"Yes, what is it man," he replied angrily.

"Mr Reynold, it's your daughter sir, she's gone" ...

The Slammed Door by C Bateman (Year 13)

The shower started. Hands shaking, Rosie crouched on the carpet and unlocked the drawer. It rattled loudly, making her heart feel like it was going to explode in her chest. She strained her ears. To her relief, the water kept running. Rosie gently eased the drawer open and rooted around for the phone. It felt cold in her clammy palms. "Please, please let it have charge!" she thought. Thank God, the screen flashed into life. She dialled the number that was etched onto her brain. All she had to do was press green, but for some reason her thumb hovered, frozen.

Looking up, her eye was caught by an image on the muted TV. It was Boris Johnson and Carrie Symonds, beaming as they announced the birth of their son. Rosie wondered: could her and James ever be like that, so blissfully happy? Three years ago, she would have said yes without even thinking about it. Now though, like everything in the world, the future didn't seem so certain.

Rosie met James at the Oxo Tower, on a night out with her friends. She was 24. He was 45: a rich, successful banker who lived in Notting Hill. Albeit a cliché, there was something rather Bond-like about him. Perhaps it was the Tom Ford suit or maybe it was the Martini he handed to her, as James introduced himself. What Rosie couldn't quite get her head around was that, out of all the glossy-haired, designer clad girls, he had drifted to her: the shy, fine-haired girl in converse, whose dress cost less than 30 quid. For hours, they chatted and drank, long after her friends had gone home. He was like no-one she'd ever met before.

Walking to Waterloo station, he said something which left her winded.

"You're beautiful."

Rosie spluttered with laughter. "Yeah right! I bet you've told every girl that."

"No," he said, his expression pensive. "None of them were like you."

And so it began. Three or four times a week, he would pick her up and take her to Mayfair bars or Michelin restaurants. At work, her phone would ping constantly with messages, asking what she was doing, who she was with. Sometimes, he would surprise her and wait outside the office. Rosie never once thought this was odd. It felt amazing for someone to take such an interest in her, to ask her questions over champagne and genuinely care about the answers she gave. Her friends, meanwhile, didn't see it as romantic and spontaneous. Whenever Rosie bailed on their plans, they would roll their eyes and sigh 'don't tell me, you're with him again'. Eventually, they would stop inviting her altogether.

Despite his charms, there was a side to James which Rosie disliked. A side which he rarely unveiled during the early doors of their relationship, yet one she grew to dread. On the first occasion, it was a Friday night and Rosie had arranged to go round to his for dinner at 7. That day, her boss had asked her to stay on at the office. By the time she'd jumped on the Circle Line and ran through the rain soaked streets to his doorstep, it was gone 8.

"Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry!" she'd gabbled, as soon as the door opened. "I tried to get away early but work was absolutely manic..."

"Hi." His voice was hard like granite, a dissonant lyric to the Michael Bublé song, floating down the stairs. The musky cologne was stifling. He didn't smile or make a move to kiss her hello. Instead, he had shut the door and ushered her into the kitchen.

Gingerly, she'd sat down at the laid table, watching him retrieve a bottle of red and uncork it. Without a word, he'd slammed a glass down before her, the sound making her flinch.

"Erm thanks," she'd said, taking a long sip and racking her brains for something to say. "How was your day?"

"My day was fine," he'd replied quietly. "What I want to know is why the hell you didn't pick up your phone."

"Oh that!" she'd said, twirling a lose strand of hair around her finger. "My phone ran out of charge. But never mind I'm here now..."

"Never mind!" he had erupted, thumping the table with his fist and causing the glasses to teeter. "Never mind! I've spent hours making you dinner. I made flipping Dauphinois potatoes for God's sake! And now, thanks to your selfishness, the whole meal is ruined!"

"James!"

Rising from his chair, he had grabbed the plates of congealed lamb shanks and the bowl of Eton Mess off the worktop, tipping the entire contents into the bin. Even now, that spoilt image still made her want to cry.

After moving in with him and getting married, the man who had bought her that Martini, morphed into someone else. He patronised and belittled her as though she were a petulant child. If she arrived home a minute late from the supermarket, he would confiscate her phone, as though she were a teenager who'd missed their curfew. When he took her to one of his work functions, he would wait until they got home and then start yelling at her about how she was an embarrassment around alcohol, about how pathetic she was, flirting and throwing herself at his colleagues. He could go days without speaking or looking at her.

Once he'd stewed for long enough, he would tell Rosie that he was sorry, that he didn't mean it and that he loved her more than anything in this world. She forgave him every time. It wasn't the flowers or the Selfridges bags or the Tiffany boxes that swayed her. It was down to the fact she loved him too.

Those nights of expensive apologies, she lay awake, rationalising his behaviour and convincing herself it was her fault. Other nights, this ritual wasn't enough to numb the fear and bruises, that marred her body. She'd pictured herself packing the suitcase, opening the front door and slamming it behind her like Nora from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. But she knew she couldn't walk away. Along with her career, bank card and house keys, he had stolen her identity. He had stripped away her ability to choose. And here they were, literally in lock-down.

While isolation was nothing new to Rosie, she wasn't used to his constant scrutiny. Previously, he would leave her dusting and vacuuming the house until he came home from the office. Now however, he watched her every move. The outbursts and smashed glasses were becoming more frequent. And the worst part: this pandemic had only legitimized his control and jealousy. She couldn't work, not just because he had made her quit her job in travel PR years earlier, but because the travel industry was collapsing. She couldn't see her friends and family, not just because he forbade it, but due to mandatory social distancing protocols. She couldn't even go food shopping, because according to the government, her diabetes placed her in the vulnerable category. Nowhere was safe.

Before Rosie registered what she was doing, her finger jabbed at the green button. The dial tone throbbed in her ears. It rang once, twice, three times. "Hello?" said the voice on the line. A lump formed in Rosie's throat, rendering speech impossible. Suddenly, the shower stopped and she heard him shout "I ask you to do one thing and you can't even put the bloody hot water on!" Footsteps pounded down the stairs. Trembling, she hung up the phone and tossed it back into the locked drawer.

"Calling someone are we?" She spun round. He stood in the doorway, towel wrapped around him, eyes boring into her.

"No," she gasped. "I was just... it was ringing so..."

"Your fancy man, was it?" he sneered.

"Course not!" she feigned a laugh. "Don't be stupid!"

Instantly, she regretted her attempt to make light of it. He grabbed her by the shoulders, digging his fingers in so deep that she yelped with pain.

"Do not call me stupid," he said, his voice slow and menacing.

"I'm sorry, please let go of me," she stammered, tears streaming down her cheeks.

He released her, only to snatch the phone and hurl it at the wall. The screen shattered. He raised his hand again. She sucked in her breath, bracing herself for what she knew was to come. But before he could act, the doorbell rang loud and clear.

Every Thursday evening, all the neighbours in the road stand on their driveways, clapping and banging saucepans. They catch one another's eyes, exchanging wooden smiles. When the applause dies, they retreat back into their separate homes, back to their separate lives. Until it's just Rosie and her husband. His arm is wrapped tightly around her shoulders. "Come on," he says, as he guides her back inside, before locking the door behind them.



After Reading the Book by E Corran (Year 8)

When Mrs Rosenburg bought the 16th century manor house, Waverly Place, everyone told her she was making a huge mistake. The house was said to be haunted by the spirit of a young lady, the Duchess of Cheshire, Mrs Alex Warne, who had been murdered by her recently deceased husband, the Duke of Cheshire.

Mr and Mrs Rosenburg had just recently got married and were looking for a house for them and their son Jacob. Jacob was only 14 years old at the time and thought a haunted house sounded like an ideal home for adventures and to show off to his new friends.

After buying the house the first thing they planned was rennervating the west wing of the house which had fallen down years ago and was covered in dust and cobwebs. But, before they planned anything, they had to sort out a suitable area to turn into bedrooms. While Mrs Rosenburg and her husband went to talk to Ms Hillary Dock, the maid, who had served many families before them, so they decided to keep her on, about living arrangements and pay, Jacob chose this time to explore the ground floor of the gloomy mansion. Taking a candle from the cupboard in the dining room, Jacob left through the first door on the left of the dining room and stared in awe at the delicate tapestry hanging on the wall. Moving further on to the next room he found a secret panel. Having pushed it open with a creek, he heard footsteps rushing up behind him, and in the panic that someone else may discover his secret, for he wanted to find out all the houses secrets on his own, he banged the panel closed again and pretended to be interested in the decorative ornaments and gilded mirror on the mantelpiece. Mrs Rosenburg sighed in relief at the sight of her son, safe, looking at the exquisite detail on the gold rimmed mirror above the fireplace.

"Oh, thank God you're safe." She cried causing Jacob to look around in surprise. The first thing Jacob noticed were his footprints and his mother's in the dust on the floor, which he hadn't noticed, being too interested in the contents of the rooms, the cobwebs in the corner of the room and the light that shone, not through windows but cracks in the walls.

Later that evening, when Mr and Mrs Rosenburg had set up the bedrooms and were just falling asleep, a loud crash was heard, coming from the bottom of the staircase. While Mr Rosenberg rushed to see what the matter was, he crashed into his son, coming equally as quickly from his room, terror written all over his face. Meanwhile, Mrs Rosenburg sat on the corner of her bed, pale as a sheet as she looked from the looming shadow outside her door, to the hall mirror at what was, or rather wasn't, there.

Mr Rosenberg and Jacob got to their feet, quickly apologising to one another before rushing downstairs to see what had caused all the noise. At the bottom of the stairs, silver shards of what appeared to be the mirror from the room Jacob had discovered earlier that day, lay scattered around the hall. When Mr Rosenburg had cleared up the glass, for he was sure Ms Dock was still in a peaceful slumber, he too disappeared back up the stairs. What the poor man was not expecting was his pale wife to be tucked up in bed in a strange position, as if she had just been dragged to bed.

Early the next morning, almost silent footsteps could be heard coming from the master bedroom followed by an almighty crash and a scream. Once again woken from a peaceful sleep, and, more worried than before, Mr Rosenburg and Jacob rushed out of their rooms, careful to avoid one another, and ran down the stairs coming to a stop by another mirror, shards of glass reflecting the two men standing next to each other, unable to decipher where the scream had come from.

A few seconds later a red-faced Ms Dock turned up panting, "I heard a scream and I thought the ghost had got you." Mrs Rosenberg laughed causing the others to jump slightly as they had not heard her approach. "Of course not, the ghost doesn't exist. Now what about that wonderful breakfast we were promised."

And without further ado, the family left maid gaping at them as they made their way to the dining room.

Mrs Rosenburg was a beautiful young woman with pale skin, round blue eyes and dark brown hair. However, this morning she looked even more exceptional than usual with her even paler skin and round, doe-like eyes, more of a silver grey than blue as well as hair so dark it appeared to be black. Mr Rosenberg decided that maybe his wife had just been so exhausted, that she had not been woken by the terrible noise, his logical mind always wanting clear realistic answers.

A few weeks passed and eventually the family grew used to a broken mirror appearing at the bottom of the stairs each night and no longer got out of bed to investigate each crash. In fact, Mr Rosenberg had gotten so comfortable in his new house that he never woke in the night anymore.

What had startled him the most was, on his son's 15 birthday, he woke to find no mirror at the bottom of the stairs and no sign of Mrs Rosenberg or Jacob. He carefully padded over to the dining room door where voices could be heard and waited until he was sure whoever was in the room with his son and wife was distracted in conversation, and threw open the door, hoping to catch the intruder in the act. What he did not expect was to see was Ms Dock, Mrs Rosenberg and Jacob to all be sitting round the table drinking big cups of tea. He quickly moved from his pose by the door and pretended that nothing was wrong, now assuming that the mirror had just already been cleared away, once again leaving his suspicions in favour of more realistic thoughts.

Jacob also appeared to be benefiting from the buying of the new house, for today, Jacob had blonde hair, big blue eyes and pale skin. Feeling surprised, Mr Rosenberg put this sudden change down to living with him and not noticing the subtle changes in his son until now, when he had changed so much, Mr Rosenberg reasoned, because he was, after all, a growing boy.

Almost a year after they had bought the house, Mr Rosenberg woke once again on his own in the house, and, finding the rest of the household in the dining room again, realised that he had woken up later than everyone else for over a year and was determined to wake up, just once, earlier than everyone else. Throughout the day Mr Rosenberg began noticing strange habits in his family he had never noticed before, the avoidance of the silver candlesticks, staying in the shade when they went on their afternoon walk by the lake. But the one that made him frown the most was their insistence that the meat be almost raw and the wine was always red. However, just like every other time he had thought of the strangeness of his family, his rational mind told him not to be silly and that he was just paranoid after never actually being able to catch the ghost himself. Voicing his suggestion of waking early the next day at dinner that evening, he was too preoccupied setting alarms and thinking of any methods he could to wake when the sun rose to notice the flicker of fear in everyone's eyes, quickly masked into a look of indifference.

After dinner he left early to bed, determined to wake up early. Mr Rosenberg was not surprised when he heard the voices of the three remaining occupants of the house, Jacob, Mrs Rosenberg and Ms Dock all talking in hushed whispers well into the night until he finally felt his eyelids droop closed and he relaxed into peaceful slumber.

That night, as the moon shone between the pale curtains and onto the counterpane covering him, Mr Rosenberg woke with a start, his mind screaming at him to run, to see three grinning faces in the moonlight, all of whom, he realised with a start, he should not have dismissed the obvious fact had changed, eyes glowing and fangs pointed until one of them leaned in, paralysing his body with fear as she whispered, "You should've just let things be." and with that her greying hair turned a pure silver and her eyes flashed dangerously "Say hello to Ms Alex Warne" And with that she bit him, her fangs sinking into the flesh on his neck.

"Not a ghost, a vampire!"

Back to Two by O Davis (Year 9)

Why me?

Why did this happen to me?

That car emerged from the dark

The screeching of the brakes. Thud.

The sudden silence after the

whaling stopped.

In only three months we were

back to two.

No more will her tiny fist

grab my finger

No more giggles, smiles

We will never know her fist word

Am I destined to be alone?

Will my family tree end with me?

I cannot take anymore

This terrible living death.