

My Writing

TRAFFORD 500 words COMPETITION WINNERS



WHSmith
1851-1894

MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester



WILLMOTT DIXON
SINCE 1828

SPOTLIGHT
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER



Contents

Foreword by Kamila Shamsie
Introduction by Wendi Swan

Year 5 and Overall Winner

The Magical Door

Mehek Ahmed, Highfield Primary School

Year 3 Winner

Gingerbelle-Rose and the Cherry Tarts

Emily Elizabeth Robertson, Wellfield Junior School

Year 4 Winner

The Magic of Books

Naomi Barber, The Bollin Primary School

Year 6 Winner

Visions of Extraordinary Things

Ehsan Rasidin Amri, Tyntesfield Primary School

Year 3 Commended Writers

1. Virtually Normal Again

Thomas Edwards, Well Green Primary School

2. The Secrets Lurking in the Cellar

Hannah Croft St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

3. Adventures in Aquarelle

Matilda Colledge, Moorlands Junior School

4. The Library

Scarlett Fox, All Saints' Catholic Primary School

5. A Scaly Discovery

Jude Hardy, St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

Year 4 Commended Writers

1. **The Temple of Gold**
Edward Thomas Jackson, Seymour Park Community School
2. **The Mysterious Green Door**
Lilliahna Morgan Robinson, Oldfield Brow Primary School
3. **The Magic Flower**
Annabel McHugh, Well Green Primary School
4. **The Secret Locked Door**
August Lock Henner, Seymour Park Community School
5. **In The Dragon Realm**
Tom Leach, Bowdon Church School

Year 5 Commended Writers

1. **The Glow**
William Fox, All Saints' Catholic Primary School
2. **Sympathy for the Devil**
Pardis Bassirian, Oldfield Brow Primary
3. **Behind the Door**
Elvie Millership, Tyntesfield Primary School
4. **The Escape of Azeroth**
Talia Abdelaal, Bollin Primary School
5. **The Mirror to Another World**
Emily Bennett, Oldfield Brow Primary School

Year 6 Commended Writers

1. **It's Always There**
Nicole Clark, St.Mary's C of E Primary School
2. **Finding Hope**
Diana Currioni, King's Road Primary School
3. **The Life of a Broccoli**
Alice Paisley, St Hugh's Catholic Primary School
4. **The Battle**
Lex Lane, Flixton Primary School
5. **The Getaway**
Nilanthi Stone, Bowdon Church School

Thanks and Acknowledgements

FOREWORD

When I was eleven years old I had one of the most important conversations of my life. My best friend had come over to my house and I handed him a book I'd just read (we always swapped books we enjoyed). 'You should read this book,' I said. And he responded, 'Why don't we write a book?' So we did. It was called 'A Dog's Life, and After' and was set in dog heaven. We had both recently lost pet dogs, and the grief of that was enormous when we started writing. But a funny thing happened — writing about the loss of my dog made the grief lighter, more bearable.

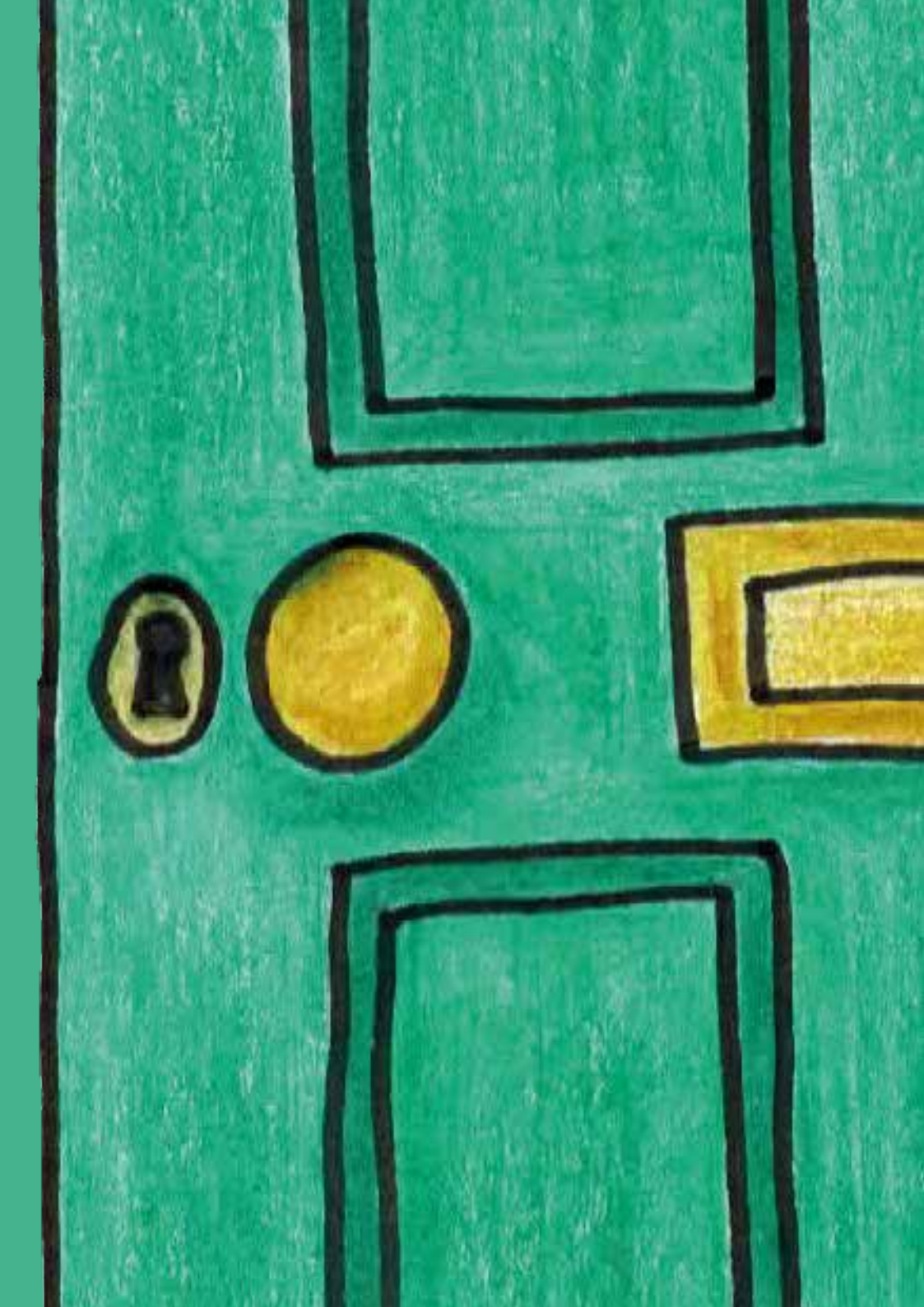


Fast forward many many years. The world went into lockdown. I was in one country — my parents and sister in another. It was hard to concentrate on anything. But I was already a few months into working on a novel, and I found that when I sat down to write I was able to leave behind the present circumstances and enter a world of imagination, in which people could be together and hug each other. Once again, writing made everything lighter, more bearable.

Reading the wonderfully impressive stories for this anthology I'm reminded of that feeling. The power of the imagination, the pleasure of putting words on a page, and the ability to both acknowledge and escape from difficulty are so strong in here. Those of us who write stories have a superpower that helps us through all of life's difficulties — hold on to it, always.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kamila Shamsie".

Kamila Shamsie



INTRODUCTION

In January 2021, we went into 'lockdown.'

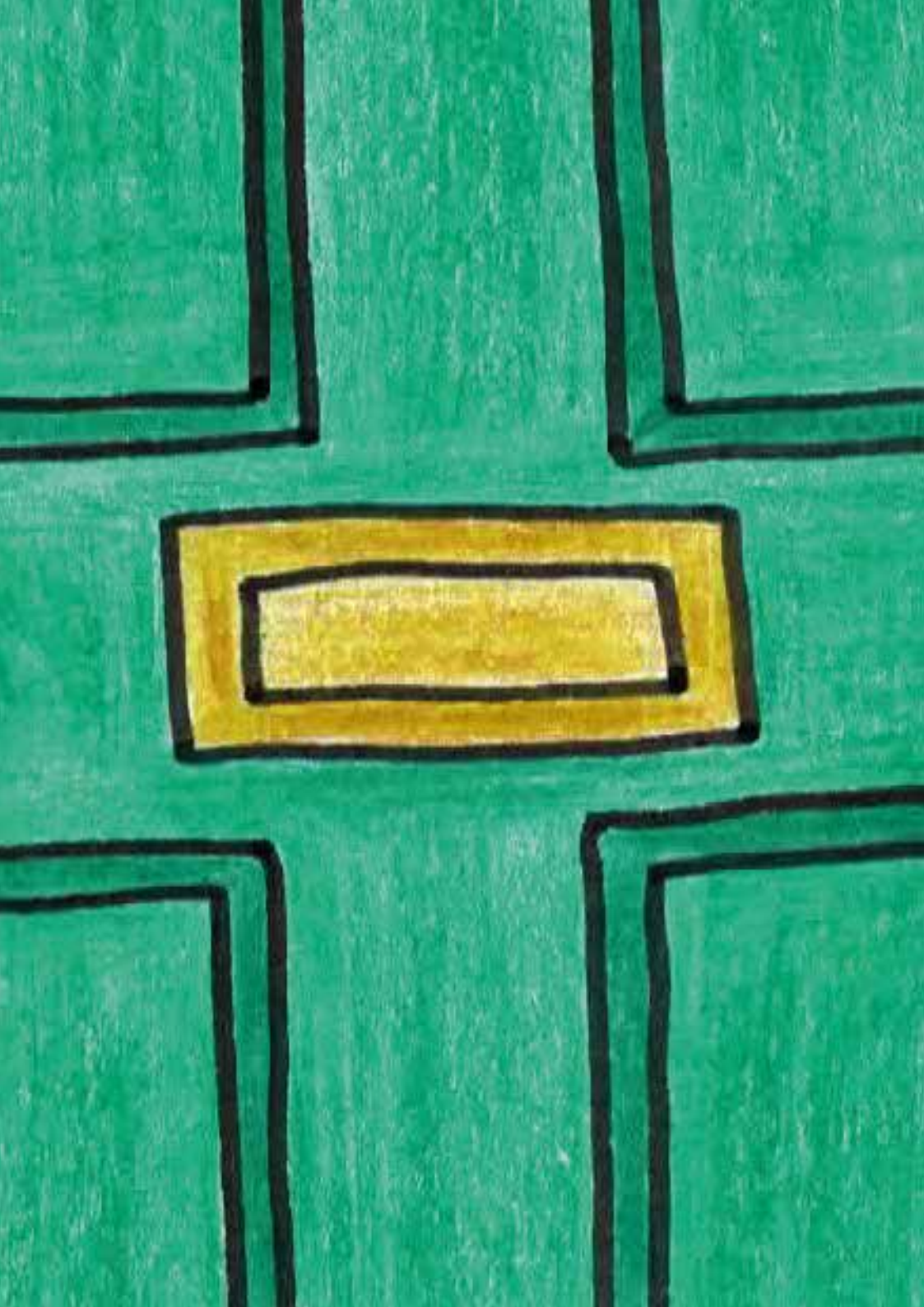
Children were struggling to be taught to learn 'virtually,' as much as Teachers were struggling to teach in this distanced and depersonalised way. The experience was strange and isolating for many people, especially for children who were used to meeting friends and family and the hustle bustle of school life.

There was a disconnection, with all that was familiar. It was for this reason that I decided to run this competition during this time; this was to try to allow a sense of normality and a feeling of community and to give children the impetus and encouragement to write during a very difficult time.

I also felt that it was an opportunity to look forwards to a different time when hugging would again be permissible. The children were therefore, all given the same starting point, as a stimulus; a photograph of a mysterious green door ...

I hope that you enjoy reading these really very special pieces of writing.

Wendi Swan



Year 5 and Overall Competition Winner

The Magical Door

Wandering through the hilly, snow-covered, woodland for our daily exercise had become the highlight of each day throughout lockdown. But this particular day was a little different, low mist brushed against our cheeks as we battled uphill with the cold winter breeze against us. It was difficult to see the person in front. The silhouette of Dad could only be seen, as he walked further ahead, so far ahead that he was no longer in sight. Which way did he turn?

Panicking and shivering, I wondered- did he turn left; did he turn right? I decided to turn left in the hope to find Dad, as I turned, I stumbled on what seemed to be a rock. Something broke my fall. I fell on my knees on what seemed to be a weathered, rotten, and damp object. The aroma of dampness hit the back of my throat.

I quickly got up and took a few steps back, the object was huge, it looked like it had been a part of a house that was built centuries ago. The arch-shaped door was solid and had decayed in the corners allowing me to peep inside. I looked through the small circle-shaped hole. I could not see anything; it was dark and had a strong musty smell.

The handle on the door had lost its shine, there was rust all over it. The large circular knob did not turn and seemed jarred. I tried again but it was hard to make a movement.

Suddenly, I was able to make little movement with the jarred knob, it clicked. I peered slowly through the door as I opened it. I could see a world we once lived in. The ripples of joy and laughter could be felt and heard as people were socialising indoors and outdoors, families gathering for celebrations. The ringing of church bells as weddings were taking place, clicking of cameras to capture such beautiful memories. The warm hugs and cuddles of grandparents could be seen, smiles on each and every person in the room filtered light and hope that one day we would return to normal.

It dawned on me that this was a symbol, a symbol of hope and freedom. Was this the light at the end of the tunnel that I could see before my very eyes?

Had I been fortunate enough to be given a sneak preview of the future to come?

"Mehek!" as I turned to see who it was, the door slammed shut. Dad was stood at the top of the hill waving at me. "Dad! Dad! Come and look!" I shouted as I attempted to open the door once again. But it was stuck. I pulled and turned the knob, but no luck. Dad called out again and I reluctantly ran towards him in the hope he would walk back with me to see what was behind the door. I shared what I had just seen with Dad.

"Oh Mehek, you and your stories!" giggled Dad.

2nd Tier Judge's comment: What a beautifully written piece this is! 'The magical door' perfectly described how much life has changed for everyone during the last year and your story gave me such a warm feeling of hope and excitement for the future; when we all look forward to a time when we can celebrate life with our loved ones again. Thank you for writing such a fantastic story! It was a joy to read.

1st Tier Judge's comment: There were some extremely strong contenders for the Year 5 winner but Mehek's story really stood out to me. I loved the vivid description of the weather which opened the story and created a powerful sense of eeriness and confusion. The description of the world beyond the door was beautiful, and the poignant ending made this a powerful tale for the strange times we are living in. Mehek's story encourages us not to take each other for granted

1st Tier Judge's comment: Mehek's fluent and beautifully balanced prose delivered a story that was full of empathy and psychological insight. I felt it really spoke to our moment and could be appreciated by anyone who has lived through the pandemic lockdown. The pacing really drew me in, and Mehek made some really smart choices around the balance of elements in her first-person narrative. Thank you for such a memorable story!

Mehek Ahmed
Year 5
Highfield Primary School

Year 3 Winner

Gingerbelle-Rose and the Cherry Tarts

Positively trembling with excitement, a plain looking gingerbread girl arrived at the grand entrance of the University of Manchester for The Fairy Tale Awards. She had been busy reading books on how to decorate herself with the most amazing icing.

It was the hottest day of the year, everybody was there, Rapunzel, The Three Little Pigs and many more. As she entered the university, everybody froze and looked around. Not even a pin dropping could be heard. Immediately, she felt embarrassed but didn't really understand why. She'd tried so hard, reading her books but everyone looked so fancy. Gingerbelle-Rose was a plain girl who was simply born in an oven and this should have been her moment to shine but she felt like running. She looked down and noticed that her icing was melting. She ran.

Gingerbelle-Rose ran faster than a cheetah through the city of Manchester until she reached a calm, magical forest. All of a sudden, she came across a beautiful clearing that had a pink and purple pastel coloured cottage on the edge of a turquoise lake. As she approached the cottage, she could see a mysterious looking beanstalk. She climbed and climbed until she reached the top where a large green door was made out of the most special fairy wood from the magical forest.

Gingerbelle-Rose knocked gently on the door and asked quietly "Is anyone there?" and there was a kindly but deep reply "At home! The door is always open." Gingerbelle-Rose didn't know what to do. Should she walk in? Who was this person? She was trembling with fear. Carefully, she pushed the door open. The room smelt of cherry tarts. If this person liked cherry tarts, they probably like gingerbread, she thought. If they like gingerbread, that's it...

Slowly, she walked into the kitchen and to her surprise she saw the most gigantic human with crazy hair. He had clean hands and wore an apron that was the size of a duvet cover. She watched as he delicately decorated cherry tarts. He turned to Gingerbelle-Rose and said "oh...come sit down and have a tart and a cup of tea...don't worry, I won't bite". Still a little nervous, Gingerbelle-Rose sat down. Over a cup of tea, they talked about everything

from how Gingerbelle-Rose felt when she walked into the university to how Tom (the giant), really wanted to make it as a baker but couldn't because he looked different. They made a plan.

A few hours later, Gingerbelle-Rose made a grand entrance at The Fairytale Awards only this time, she felt AMAZING. She was dressed in sparkly, non-melt, magenta icing and the room stood still. An unlikely prince with a twinkle in his eye asked her if she wanted to dance and they danced and danced and danced. The time came for the winner of the award to be announced. The Queen opened the golden envelope and read out Gingerbelle-Rose' name. The Queen started to twitch and itch. When she became Queen, she made it law for ginger to be banished as she simply couldn't resist the taste. People started to mutter....

This was not what Gingerbelle-Rose had in mind. She ran faster than the wind back through the forest and up the beanstalk. Tom was stood at the bottom of the beanstalk holding a tray of cherry tarts. When the queen arrived at the green door she stopped, paused and said "What are these and who are you...you look familiar". Tom told the queen all about the times he was turned away because he looked different, the queen listened and ate one of the magical tarts. Tom asked the queen if she liked the tarts. "They are delightful, much better than gingerbread and tarts don't run away. We must make you the baker of all future parties that I attend. Come to the palace and we will build you the biggest of kitchens".

Gingerbelle-Rose slept at the top of the beanstalk that night and thought to herself how happy she was for her friend, Tom. He had his dream job after all these years. She may not have got to know more about the unlikely prince but with Tom as the Queens personal baker, she was sure their paths would cross again in the future.

Judge's Comment: The imagination in this story had me smiling from start to finish. The twisting of fairytales was extremely clever from the gingerbread to the beanstalk. It merged in with real life locations - like the University of Manchester - to make a very original story! Fantastic job!

Judge's Comment: What really stands out in Emily's story is the strength of the plotting. It's really tough to create a sense of a complete story in just 500 words, but the tale of Ginger-Belle Rose was really well thought-out and kept me in suspense from sentence to sentence. What a wonderful sense of story this writer has! Ginger-Belle had a real sense of purpose and the writer kept us rooting for her!

Emily Elizabeth Robertson
Year 3
Wellfield Junior School



Year 4 Winner

The Magic of Books

The pandemic was hard. Tedious long, lonely days, as an only child I really missed my friends. When my parents announced our move to Gran's house out in the middle of nowhere, my head felt like a washing machine. I was terrified I would be even lonelier.

Gran had a huge overgrown garden, so at least I could enjoy that. One cold, misty morning I pulled on my wellies, and a big old comfy coat to go exploring. That was when dull lockdown life changed from lonely to breath-taking.

At the bottom of the garden the bushes turned an emerald green, and magically whispered to each other. Excited, I hiked through and found a gigantic wall with sage green ivy cascading over it, like a big beard that needed a shave. I stumbled over a rock and suddenly the ivy parted to reveal a shiny bottle green door with a tiny heart shaped window. Gran's garden was enchanted! My heart beating as quickly as a raging fire, I turned the handle. I didn't even know what was behind that door though what I found was awesome....

"Welcome to the Land of Sensations!!" Sung a friendly goblin dancing by. Every bone in my body rattled, I wanted to find out more. I followed him down a wondrous track of trees that grew ice cream sundaes, milkshakes, and all sorts of AMAZING treats! I couldn't help trying one! It was glorious, the taste popped on my tongue and the second I picked it a new one grew back!! I also saw dancing elephants, a singing tree, dogs flying hot air balloons and even an animal tea party. I was so content I forgot about the time! Briskly I ran back through the door, Mum would be so worried! But when I got home I found I had only been gone for an hour.

Next morning behind the door stood a hamster next to a lift! "Well what are you waiting for?" he chortled. I excitedly jumped in. "Where to?" On the keypad were different time periods. "The Tudors" I whispered, I had loved learning about them in school. My tummy flew up into my mouth as the lift whizzed around and landed with a jolt. I found myself in a Tudor school, it was scary but amazing. I even got whipped for not sitting straight!

I enjoyed multiple lands through my Gran's mysterious door. I even visited a school of magic and wizardry. I made potions to transform things, luckily they wore off quickly as I accidentally turned into a cat once! I also helped the good wizards defeat petrifying enemies.

After lockdown, beaming from ear to ear, I took Mum to the enchanted door. But to my astonishment it was gone! Instead, there was just a pile of books from Gran's bookshelves on a picnic blanket next to the cascading ivy. "My favourite books!" Mum exclaimed. "But what about the magic door?!" I protested. "Books are magic" smiled Mum.

2nd Tier Judge's comment: Your story was a beautiful reminder of how, especially in these tough times, books can be an amazing escape. I absolutely loved the originality of your choice of similes and your description was superb – I could really picture Gran's garden and the Land of Sensations! A very imaginative and enjoyable story, well done Naomi!

1st Tier Judge's comment: Naomi has a lovely way of using metaphors and similes to bring the visual world of the story to life. With all the sounds and senses and smells, I really felt like I was in the narrator's world. The plotting produced a lovely twist and left me thinking about the story long after I had read it.

Naomi Barber
Year 4
Bollin Primary School

Year 6 Winner

Visions of Extraordinary Things

The first missile dropped.

Like a flower blooming, the fire rose up attempting to reach the clouds. WW2 had just begun and Nazi's were already soaring through the London sky. They lit up the patches of darkness and replaced it with death. I was fearful. Startled. I was on my own, no one beside me but my own fate. A fearful shadow was strewn across my face. Like a stew, my stomach bubbled and churned. A bundle of dismay tumbled into me.

The second missile dropped.

This was much closer than the first and so the force of its collision caused me to stumble backwards into a bush and the foliage swallowed me whole. I faltered into a pit and smashed my head into a pile of mud. This pit was surrounded by bushes so it must've been concealed. I scouted the area, hoping it would be a sufficient place to get shelter from the rain of missiles. And that's when I spotted it. The door. It was a calming emerald green with a heart shape engraved in the very centre of it. It looked so alluring. I reached out my hand and pushed it open.

I had visions. Visions of extraordinary things.

I was greeted by a cold dark place that seemed to possess a murky and empty surrounding. No sky or birds or trees. I saw a man in a baggy white getup. He was planting an American flag into the craggy ground. This man had an American logo imprinted on his shoulder and something that said in hulking capital letters: ARMSTRONG.

The scene shifted. I was now standing in the centre of a vast stadium. Vibrant colours painted the walls. People were cheering and holding up flags of different countries. Men and women were sprinting around the gravel track. The crowd went up in a roar once a racer crossed the finish line. The second time the spectators wailed with glee, everything turned black, though the sound of the cheers still remained however they were utterly faint and turned even fainter by the second.

As soon as the howls of laughter and encouragement died completely, I felt a warm ray of sunlight cast onto my face. I felt dirt beneath my fingers. My body ached. I opened my eyes. I was back in the pit that I had fallen into during the relentless bombing. Then I came to my senses. I spun around to face the door. Nothing. It was just the edge of a pit. I rubbed my hand across patchy mud. I had just seen what would happen after the war.

"We have hope" I muttered. I had glimpsed at multiple promising segments of the future; that this misery and torment is only temporary. That beyond this grim blanket of war is something beautiful and our human eyes aren't capable of seeing what is yet to come.

Judge's comment: I really enjoyed the historical links used in this story. I also loved its compelling message of 'hope' that I feel is even more poignant at this present time. A beautiful, thought provoking piece of writing.

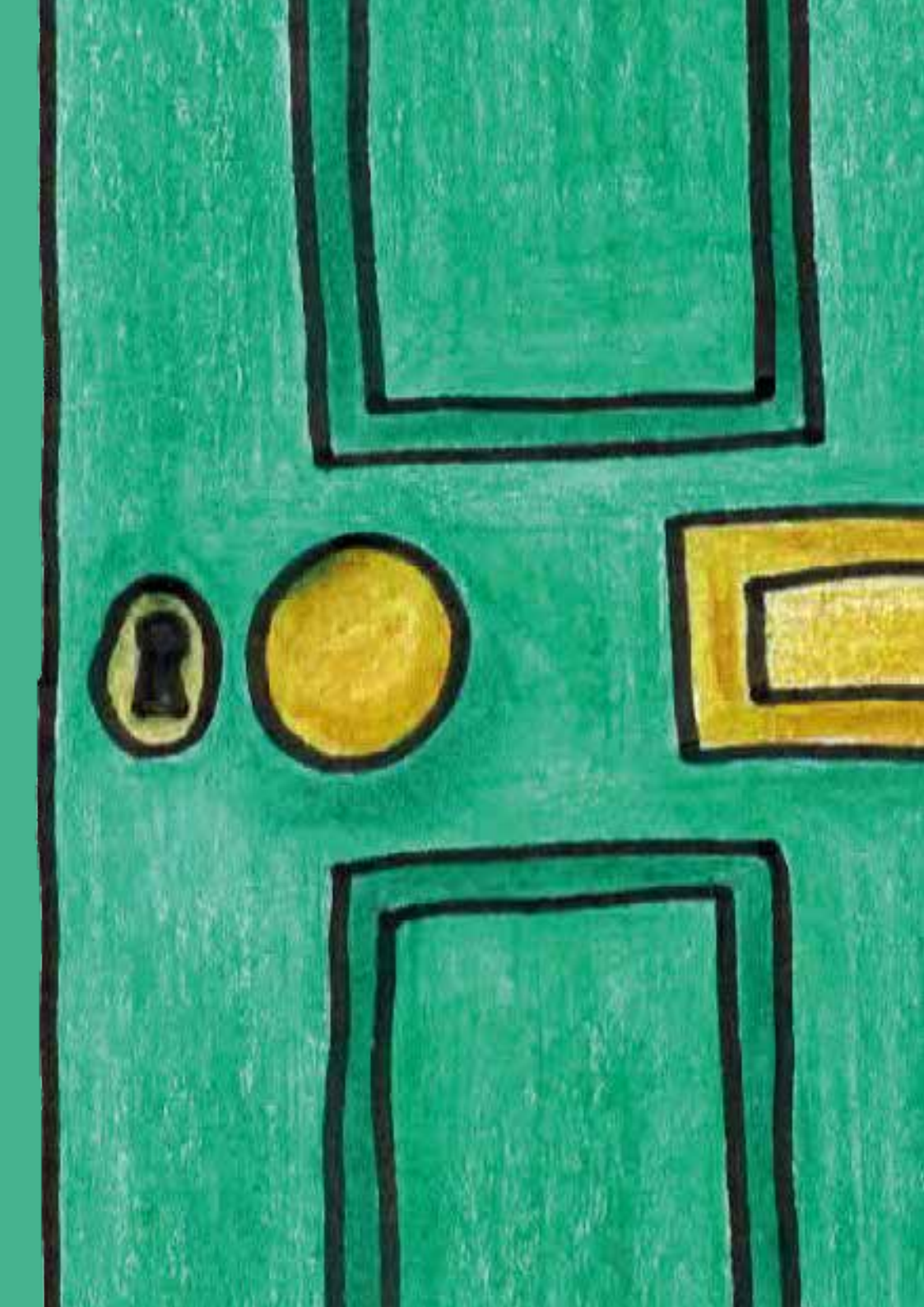
Judge's comment: This was a dramatic and vivid tale which displayed masterful control of pace to build tension. I enjoyed the contrast between the powerful descriptions of the war scene and the hopeful alternative beyond the door. The ending was profound and philosophical.

Ehsan Rasidin Amri
Year 6
Tyntesfield Primary School

The background is a vibrant green with a fine, woven texture. In the center, there is a prominent yellow rectangular shape with a black outline, which has a smaller, slightly recessed yellow rectangle inside it. Surrounding this central element are several other black-outlined rectangular shapes of varying sizes, some of which are partially cut off by the edges of the frame, creating a grid-like pattern.

Year 3

Commended
Writers



Virtually Normal Again

It was a rainy day in Hale and the word Coronavirus had been in my head for nearly a year now. I can't wait for a time when I can see my Grandparents again, hug my little cousins and play in the park with my friends. However, for the one hundredth time I got the laptop out to video call my Grandparents. Hold on a minute... What's that on the screen? I could see a neat small green door, engraved with a heart and with a golden latch, surrounded by crispy ivy leaves. I wondered what would happen if I pressed the door? Without really thinking about what would happen next, I clicked the door and it sucked me into the laptop. I felt like I was being swirled around in a washing machine and was getting sucked further and further down. Suddenly I landed on the cold ground with a thump. I opened my eyes and was in my Granny and Grandpa's garden. They ran up to me and hugged me.

"You're not allowed to hug me" I said shocked.

"What do you mean?" they asked.

I told them all about the Coronavirus and that we had to keep two meters away from each other. They laughed and said they'd never heard of it. Then I realised this must be a land where it never existed. I was amazed and so happy. I went to explore the garden and to my surprise I found my Grandad fishing in the pond at the top of the garden.

"Why are you here?" I asked.

"Well, I knew you were going to come so I got the fishing rods and bait ready to go fishing" Grandad explained.

I kept thinking how brilliant this new land without Coronavirus was. After I'd caught some fish with Grandad, I carried on wondering around the garden and heard some music. I followed the music to the top of the garden where I found my friends playing pass the parcel.

"Hey, do you want to join in?" they asked.

I was so excited to be able to play with my friends again I immediately

joined in the game. After eating the sweets, I unwrapped the last layer in the game and saw a pretty looking green door on the newspaper. Even though I was having so much fun in this land without Coronavirus I was interested to find out where this new door took me, so I dived straight in. The world started spinning again and I was beginning to feel a bit sick. Suddenly I felt myself land on a warm fluffy carpet. I looked up to see I was back in Hale on a rainy day with the laptop still in front of me. Had it all been a dream? If it was, it was a brilliant adventure and gave me hope and excitement for a future without Coronavirus, when I can see my friends and hug my Grandparents again.

Judge's Comment: A thoroughly enjoyable story of a boy needing an escape from the sadness of this world. I could really feel the pain and sorrow of the writer wanting to see friends and family again. It reminds the reader of more joyful and normal times and gives hope for a future without COVID-19. Well done for writing such a wonderful story, Thomas!

Thomas Edwards
Year 3
Well Green Primary School

The Secrets Lurking in the Cellar

Fairy life can be tough. It's not as simple as looking pretty and giving out money, I can tell you. Bramble, my trainee, has asked me ninety-nine questions this morning. If I hear him say my name 'Posie!' again, my wings will start to droop! It's Bramble's first day of tooth-fairy training today.

"Bramble, hurry up! We have a tremendously busy day," I instruct him impatiently. We sneak out of our dormitories, avoiding Veronika, the evil boss of all fairies. Veronika ALWAYS has her beady, black eyes on you. "Where are you going?" she sneers.

"To do our shifts early," I explain.

"That's NOT happening, back to your rooms!" she bawls furiously.

Fairy head-quarters is in the vast cellar of Evelyn and Elijah's home, who are completely unaware of the remarkable activities underneath their floorboards! Bramble and I silently fly past the peaceful, sleeping children to commence our tooth-round. We have many drop-offs and with explaining countless things to Bramble, we are massively behind schedule! When we return home, the golden light of the sun is beaming.

"You're late!" barks Veronika, as we zoom into the cellar.

"The children are awake! Did they spot us?" Bramble whispers worriedly.

"No," I lie. We are in SO much trouble. We broke the golden rule: children cannot know fairies exist!

Moments later, we hear giant footsteps, galloping towards us. I flutter over to investigate. Looking through the little hole, carved into the fairy-sized door, I see a MASSIVE, sparkling, blue eye, peering through.

"Evelyn! I was right!" Elijah exclaims animatedly.

"Calm down, let me see. It's probably ju-"

Evelyn suddenly stops talking, her eyes widening. I am standing at the doorway, frozen.

"F-f-fairies!" she mumbles nervously.

"Yes, we're P-p-posie and B-b-bramble." I stutter.

Suddenly, I hear Veronika screaming and flying towards us, her wand swooshing. Within seconds she has the children, Bramble and I tied up in a rope, deep in the cellar. "You broke the golden rule! You must be punished!"

The room is shaking as a result of Veronika's booming, shrieking voice. A bucket on a shelf is teetering on the edge, if it falls off... 'BANG!'. The bucket falls, knocking Veronika out!

"Quick! Shuffle over there so I can pick up her wand with my toes!" shouts Evelyn. Her dancer toes expertly grip the wand. She hands it to me, and I wave it to break the spell.

I point the wand at the children, crying as I cast the fairy-forget spell, "You cannot remember having fairies lurking in your cellar!". Within seconds, Evelyn and Elijah are back in their rooms, having the memory of the last few minutes erased completely!

"Quick, do the same spell on Veronika!" screams Bramble.

I flash the wand and throw it at Veronika's feet. "What are you two staring at?" she thunders.

Bramble and I look at each other smiling with relief. That was close! We can continue to secretly lurk in the cellar!

Judge's comment: Fairy life can indeed be tough. This careful story of life in fairy head-quarters is retold through lively dialogue. Beautifully written, it warms the soul. Full marks.

Hannah Croft

Year 3

St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

Adventures in Aquarelle

My name is Florence d'Etoile I am 13, have long, brown hair and sparkling, sapphire blue eyes. I love adventures and am never without my trusty rucksack. I live with my brother Gabriel d'Etoile. He is 10, has scruffy, ginger hair and a wonky smile. And last but not least my cousin Frederick Dubuis, he is 8, has blonde hair and hazel eyes.

As me and Gabriel made our way out of the house and onto the freshly cut grass we headed towards the town square. When we reached our destination I paid for a shiny bateau and we headed down the river to the beautiful public garden. When we arrived, there was a strange new olive, green door, wondering where it would take us, we got closer and closer until the door swung open and we were sucked inside spinning round and round and until we hit water, with an overpowering force we were smacked down and it was clear there was no way out.

Full of disappointment we set off to look for any evidence people live in this strange world. With no luck we gave up and rummaged through my rucksack searching for food when all of a sudden Frederick appeared with a huge sandwich in his hands. "Where did you come from?" I asked. He just shrugged.

I leaned forward to grab a bite, but Frederick snatched it back at the last second and shoved in my rucksack. "We should save this," he said. "We might need to ration our food."

As we approached an underwater village a sign bobbed past that read in faded letters: welcome to Aquarelle. As I finished reading the last few letters a chill ran down my spine. "Come on let's go" I said in a prickly voice. "I have a bad feeling about this place."

We went into one of the shell houses and found a boy cooking seaweed soup in a huge pan. I gagged, the smell was nauseating, like stinky socks. "Who are you?" he said when we were in what seemed to be his living room. "You shouldn't be here. It's not safe."

Suddenly there was an almighty bang, as the front door was thrown open. Standing, staring at us all was...the tiniest octopus I had ever seen. My first thought was to laugh, but I immediately realised that this octopus meant business.

His slimy, lemon tentacles sprang out, four of them heading straight towards me, Gabriel, Frederick and the boy. There wasn't a moment to lose. I flung myself behind the sofa, grabbed the baguette and leapt out, brandishing it like a sword. The octopus shrivelled back and we slammed the door shut, breathless with fear and excitement.

"Wow," said the boy. "Impressive skills. But I hope you're ready for more. This is the cursed village of Aquarelle where nobody gets out alive..."

Judge's comment: Grippingly original, and with intriguing characterisation, this action-packed tale has me wondering what happens next. A magical, under-the-sea mystery which captivates and has the reader on the edge of their seat.

Matilda Colledge
Year 3
Moorlands Junior School

The Library

Rosie scrambled past the toolboxes and plant pots to the back of her grandad's shed. "Ready or not, here I come!" shouted her sister from the garden. Nervously, Rosie crouched down and accidentally knocked over a wheelbarrow. It was then she spotted a small, green door she had never seen before. Bravely, she turned the rusty handle and tip-toed through.

Rosie gasped, her eyes wide like an owl's. There were books everywhere, rows and rows, all different colours, shapes, and sizes. Rosie loved reading, this was the most exciting thing in the world for her, a massive library all to herself. Confidently, she walked to the comfy looking blue chair in the middle of the room. There was already a book on it 'Diving under the sea'. Perfect she thought as she sat down and opened it to read. Something sparkly fell onto her lap, it was a silver necklace with a precious glowing, neon stone. It was so dazzling she couldn't resist putting it on.

Suddenly, her chair shook, the floor rumbled and the bookcases creaked. Almost unbelievably, books magically opened, pages fluttered and danced around the room. Thud! The book dropped to the floor and a whirlpool shot out of it. Quickly, she tried to shut the book but it was too powerful. It was growing bigger and bigger, swirling around, grabbing and sucking everything in sight, including her!

Seconds later, she looked down at herself in amazement, she was underwater, but she could breathe easily. She felt gills on her neck and saw her hands were now webbed, her legs had transformed into a beautiful long, purple tail! A magnificent new world surrounded her: clear tropical water, bright multi-coloured coral reef and hundreds of different fish in all the colours of the rainbow. Rosie felt like all her senses had come alive: she could taste the salty sea water, smell the seaweed and hear the rushing bubbles.

Eager to explore, Rosie swished her tail and soon found some little seahorses to play with, dancing and dashing in and out of an old, sunken shipwreck. Totally distracted, horror filled her face when she eventually saw the wide-open jaws of a gigantic whale. It was too late. Pitch-black, stinky and damp. Rosie needed to get out quickly. She screamed, thumping her hands and whacking her tail repeatedly. Nothing happened, it wasn't working.

Completely exhausted, she had just about given up hope when she remembered the glowing necklace still around her neck. That's how this had all started. If she took it off maybe this whole magical disaster would disappear. It was worth a try. As fast as she could, she grabbed at it and yanked.

Immediately, Rosie felt a powerful whoosh of water and she was shot upwards and straight out the whale's blowhole. When she opened her eyes, to her relief, she was standing back in the Library. Shakily, she stumbled back through the small, green door and thought to herself no one will ever believe me.

Judge's comment: From the beginning, this story hooks the reader and take you on a journey. What a wonderful story! It reminded me a lot of C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Magician's Nephew*, when Polly and Digory touch the magical rings and are taken to the wood between the worlds. I enjoyed your use of language throughout. Well done on writing a fantastic story, Scarlett!

Scarlett Fox

Year 3

All Saints' Catholic Primary School

A Scaly Discovery

Once there was an explorer called Mr Edward Mektrick. He was part of a group of explorers and zoologists called the S.O.A.O (Study Of Animals Organisation). He had a friend called Dr John Srenwick who was a zoologist.

One day Mr Mektrick was tidying his lounge when his jet-black phone started ringing. He reached down and picked it up. He answered, and it was Dr John Srenwick. "Edward", he said, "Meet me at my house. I've got something to show you." Mr Mektrick got in his car and zoomed off to Dr Srenwick's home.

When he arrived, he walked through the door surrounded by ivy. He went straight to the laboratory, which was full of gadgets and gizmos, microscopes and magnets, potions and a pet iguana called Gecko.

"John?" called Mr Mektrick. "Over here," called John, who was staring through a microscope. "Look at this," instructed John. Edward looked and saw that on each piece there was a scaly pattern. "When I saw that pattern I thought it belonged to a dinosaur, but when I put it together it wasn't a dinosaur footprint, it was something new," explained John, who was now putting the pieces together. "I think it could be a dragon footprint."

The room was completely silent. "A... dragon?!" said Edward, obviously confused. "Yes!" said John. "We need to investigate. Let's start where we found this footprint, in Wyre Forest. Get your coat, we'll go now." Edward, still puzzled, got his coat and followed John to the car.

After a few hours' drive they arrived at the forest. They got out of the car and returned to the clearing where Edward had found the broken footprint. "Let's look around," said John, staring at the place the footprint was found.

Edward called to John. "Look at this! These trees have been flattened. It looks like they form a path." The two men climbed through the knocked down trees and came to a huge mountain. Edward, tripping over the last tree, staggered forwards, snapping a twig under his foot.

A rumbling started, growing to a roar as the mountain started shaking, dirt flying into the air and rocks tumbling down its sides. "What's happening?" screamed John as the mountain grew larger until it exploded in a hail of rocks and dirt, revealing a humongous mountain dragon! The dragon roared, shaking its head from side to side, and spat a boulder from its mouth towards them. John and Edward turned and ran, the boulder crashing down where they were standing, throwing dirt and pebbles into the air.

Reaching the clearing, they tripped over each other in a tangle as the shadow of the dragon loomed over them and a sound like thunder as the dragon landed near them.

Luckily John had planned ahead, and pulled some roasted chicken from a container, throwing it way past the dragon. The dragon chased after the food, giving John and Edward the chance to escape.

Now they had proof, dragons were real.

Judge's comment: This story kept me on my toes the entire time! The use of adjectives was fantastic and it brought really clear and creative images to mind. The story built up a lovely tension up to the amazing final line: "Now they had proof, dragons were real." Well done!

Jude Hardy

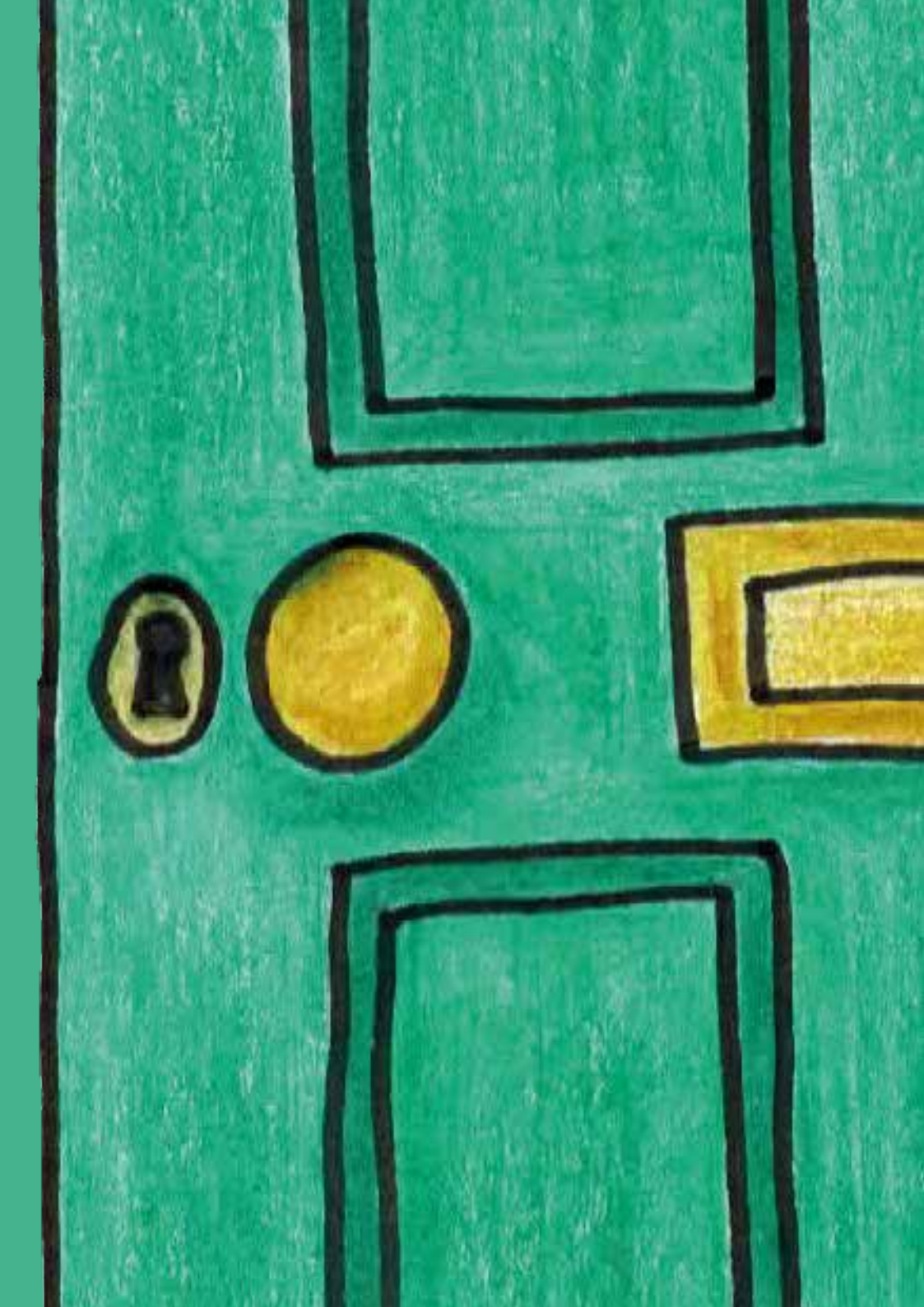
Year 3

St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

The background is a vibrant green with a fine, woven texture. In the center, there is a prominent yellow rectangular shape with a black outline, which has a smaller, slightly recessed yellow rectangle inside it, also with a black outline. Surrounding this central element are several other black-outlined rectangular shapes of varying sizes, some of which are partially cut off by the edges of the frame, creating a grid-like pattern.

Year 4

Commended
Writers



The Temple of Gold

Once upon a time in Bangkok, there stood a solid gold temple. No one had dared to enter the temple for many centuries. Until now...

There was only one way in and one way out. A solid green door. It was always open, yet no-one ever entered the regal, majestic temple because of one thing. Spirits.

No one knew what they looked like or how they got there, but everyone knew they were there. Except little, sweet May Khadee. She thought it was nonsense, the fact of actual ghosts living in her amazing country! So one day she decided it was just about ENOUGH! There were NOT ghosts living in beautiful Thailand! May would prove that once and for all.

When May told her parents they were LIVID! "Young lady, you are not going to that infernal temple! That is THAT!

I don't care what they say, I'm going to do it anyway! Thought May.

So that night when the Khadee family were fast asleep May crept out of her bedroom, avoiding the creaky floorboard, down the stairs and remembering to go through the front door as the back one was in need of oiling.

Luckily for May, they lived just in front of the temple. As she crept through the misty fog of midnight, the temple door loomed over her as if to say Go home, go home before it's too late. Nevertheless, May was about to carry out phase one of her mission. Get inside the temple.

Just as May was nearing the main shrine room something scuttled across the temple floor. It's just a rat thought May. Oho, but May very well knew it wasn't a rat. She was regretting her "heroic" journey more and more as she drew closer to the heart of the temple.

When the elaborate door of the shrine room was in sight, three blood stained spikes jutted out of the hallway walls. May was getting a sense of how dangerous this mission was going to be.

As she entered the shrine room, May saw the distinctive silhouette of her god. Buddha. She knew this was the shape of Buddha as she went to the temple near school for her Buddhist lessons and regularly saw statues and shrines of this holy figure dotted around the stone building.

As she neared the statue, water started gushing out of the pipes along the walls all around her! When she stepped on the loose tile, she must have triggered a trap!

May was now splashing and thrashing about in the water that was still continuously rising, and the air bubble at the top of the room was getting smaller and smaller! As she tried to rise to the surface it was as if some invisible gravitational pull was grabbing her by the legs and pulling her down to the bottom of the murky depths.

Nowadays, there is a new spirit in the temple which the local people nicknamed "Xāc". Thai for "May".

Judge's comment: I thoroughly enjoyed reading this story and felt as though I had been transported to Thailand through your effective description. This story really stood out, cleverly building tension throughout and ending in a way I did not expect! Well done!

Edward Thomas Jackson
Year 4
Seymour Park Community School

The Mysterious Green Door

Lizzy was a thoughtful sort of girl; she would often sit quietly at the bottom of the garden wondering about things of interest and today was no exception. On her last visit to blue bell cottage, she had stumbled across a green door standing like a statue, in a small clearing of the wood at the end of the garden. Lizzy had been considering the why's and how's of the door for the last week, but had frustratingly come to no answer. The door was thick slatted, supported by a sturdy wooden frame, she remembered the moss obscured cobbled path leading towards it that disappeared as she moved carefully around the detached entrance. More investigation was needed and Lizzy was excited for the morning.

Lizzy woke to the friendly glow of the sun shining through her window, it's beams reaching out like a warm hug, she could hear the birds playfully signing, as she watched the tree branches outside waving in the gentle breeze. She leaped from her bed like a snow leopard, her long white hair whipping wildly like its tail. Missing one or two steps, she launched herself down the stairs and ran across the garden, the soft breeze playing in her untamed hair, she could feel the tall grasses wriggling through her open fingers as her outstretched arms lifted, she felt like she was flying.

As she approached the wood, she was excited to see a carpet of blue bells, softly swaying in the breeze, their thin green leaves reaching for the spring sun as it peaked through the trees. The sweet flavourful smell of wild flowers soothed her racing thoughts of the green door, hypnotised by their beauty her gaze now focused on the tall thin, dragon scaled trees which sat straight like soldiers guarding the clearing.

Suddenly, a crow screamed loudly, like an angry old man telling her to get off his lawn. Lizzy could no longer hear the other birds singing, instead the ghostly whispers of the wind as it pushed past the soldier like trees, surrounding the clearing with an icy cuddle. Lizzy's heart began to bang like a drum, each beat getting louder until her heart was in her ears. Suddenly, the crow screamed its warning again and again, Lizzy felt frightened as the unfriendly wind snuck sneakily behind her, the air was damp and heavy as the sun faded behind the thick green umbrella of trees.

Lizzy ran. The wood stood still as the darkness was carried in on heavy clouds. Hurriedly she galloped towards the edge of the wood, the tapping of rain was loud as it began falling from leaf to leaf, cold bubbles exploding like paint splatters falling faster and faster. Lizzy zoomed like a shooting star across the garden her breath steaming like a dragon in the cold air. Sliding through the door she felt disappointed, but knew that tomorrow, she would try again to unmask the green door in the woods.

Judge's Comment: It is a very well structured story with excellent language choices throughout. I was really impressed with the cliffhanger at the end.

Lilliahna Morgan Robinson
Year 4
Oldfield Brow Primary School

The Magic Flower

In a country far away lived a girl called Flora. She was walking through a dark, gloomy forest when she came across a green, wooden door cut into an old oak tree. The door had a heart-shaped window in it and the door frame was surrounded by dark green ivy. What was through the door? Suddenly, on the floor she saw something glistening - it was a tiny key! It fitted the keyhole perfectly. Flora decided to open it and have a little look.

Flora found herself in a strange land with countless brightly coloured trees and flowers. There was a crystal-clear lake which reflected the beautiful blue sky. It was so different to her polluted, dirty world. It was like a dream. As she stood there, something curious brushed against her head. When she looked up, she saw a blue-white shimmering fairy-like girl floating over her head.

Flora gasped and was frightened at first, but soon realised there was nothing to fear. "Do not be afraid" the girl whispered in a calm voice "I am Blossom, the plant spirit". Blossom went on to explain that Flora had entered the Spirit of Nature World. The girls chatted and soon became friends. Blossom spent most of the day showing Flora around and when it was time to go home, Blossom gave Flora a special gift. "Take this magical rainbow flower." said Blossom "Each petal has a magic purpose; the red petal will give you seeds, the orange and yellow petals will give you heat and sunshine and the blue and purple petals will give you raindrops. Use it wisely in your world and never give it away." And with that, Blossom vanished, and Flora was back home.

Flora proudly kept her rainbow flower in a vase by her window until one day it disappeared. She saw a monkey outside with the flower. It swung off through the trees and Flora gave chase.

When Flora caught the monkey, she demanded to know why he had stolen her flower. "Don't be angry, I took it because it was so beautiful, and I have not seen a flower for many years. My forest was cut down by people and now nothing grows there" sobbed the monkey.

"I will help you, if you return my flower" said Flora gently "now, what is your name?"

"Cheeky" replied the monkey sniffing noisily.

Flora then went on to explain that the flower had magical petals and with it she could help to re-plant the forest, plant-by-plant. She touched the red petal and a tiny seed fell onto the soil. She then touched the yellow and blue petals and sunshine and raindrops both fell onto the seed. A tiny shoot began to sprout.

Cheeky and Flora became great friends, and the duo spent the rest of their days wandering the planet and planting new seeds. Slowly, they reversed the damage that humans had done to the planet, plant-by-plant.

Judge's comment: This short story made me think about our choices we make regarding the environment. It kept the reader interested throughout and it was a pleasure to read.

Annabel McHugh

Year 4

Well Green Primary School

The Secret Locked Door

Freya is a young girl in New York but her New York is guarded by a wall that never ends. In the middle of this wall is a locked door. She's always wondered what lies behind the never ending wall, so much so that one day she asked her mother "what is behind that door?" Her mother laughed. "No one is ever going to know what's behind that door. It's pointless to even think about it. You should get on with your homework."

The next day, Freya begged her mum to allow her not to go to school. "Why don't you want to go to school?" Her mum asked, "Isn't it fun?" "No," replied Freya, "I get bullied every day, every second, it's not fun at all. Just please, let me stay home for once. Please, just for one day." But her mother said no. "I have to go to work and we can't afford for me to stay home even for one day."

Now, before I forget I must tell you about a girl called Ellie. She had exactly the same problem. One early Spring morning, Ellie looked out of the window at the wall and over it but the tall trees got in the way. Although they didn't know each other, like Freya, Ellie also wanted to know who and what was behind the wall. Ellie was so curious she asked her father. Chuckling, her father replied, "Oh my darling, you'll never know what's behind the wall. I've even heard the people behind the wall aren't very nice." But Ellie knew he was wrong. She knew somehow that she was connected to someone behind the wall but she didn't know who. As she watched her father leave for work, she turned to her mother and asked her, "Mother, can I not go to school today? Please, please, please," she begged. But her mother replied, "Why don't you want to go to school? When I was a kid I loved going to school. Why don't you?" Ellie sighed heavily, "You see mother, they make fun of me every second of every day." So Ellie found herself walking to school.

As Ellie and Freya each made their way to their own schools, they both turned away and headed straight for the locked door, arriving at exactly the same moment. Freya approached the door and not knowing if anyone was on the other side, decided to knock on it. On the other side of the door, Ellie's heart pounded. She also knocked on the door, replying to Freya. At the same time, they both said, "Hello?" They were so excited to know they were not alone.

"What's your name?" Asked Freya. "I'm Ellie, what's your name?" "I'm Freya. See that heart-shaped hole in the door? Come closer so we can see each other." At that moment, as they looked at each other for the first time, they realized that they looked identical to each other!!

Judge's comment: This story is so well thought out with lots of appropriately used speech and a fantastic twist at the end. This cliff hanger with Ellie and Freya left me wanting to know more, which is exactly what I love in a story! Well done!

August Lock Henner
Year 4
Seymour Park Community School

In The Dragon Realm

Hunched over, Raz was not paying attention to anything in the world. He hated his life at the old victorian boarding school in the north west of England. His uncle Drac, who was very arrogant and selfish, was the headmaster of the school and with a smirk always sent Raz to detention for not listening in class. Raz was at his happiest when he was out on the lawn or climbing up the big oak trees, especially his favourite oak tree which had lots of sticky-outy, twisty branches.

One windswept, misty day, Raz was absent-mindedly meandering through the field when suddenly, out of the mist stepped an old man with a hunched back and leaning on an old walking stick. The only thing he said before he disappeared in purple smoke was: "The tree is the key." At once, Raz knew it was a riddle as he knew lots himself and always loved to solve one. After hours of riddling, he had worked it out. 'The tree', well, of course that would mean Raz's favourite tree, and 'is the key' would mean that his favourite oak tree is the key. But the key to what?

The next morning, at 5:55, Raz hurriedly, quickly and excitedly tiptoed down the stairs, crept along the landing (passing the servants' bedroom as he went), and down another staircase to the ground floor where he crept through the back door. Minutes later, Raz was searching the trunk, branches and leaves for a key hidden amongst the moss and ivy. After what felt like days, he moved away some ivy to find a moss-covered, camouflaged door that was blending in so well that Raz couldn't see it at first. He hesitated and looked back not sure what to do. He decided to creak open the door and have a peek around but when Raz did all he saw was what seemed to be a metallic green sky. He stepped through the mysterious, green door and realised it wasn't the sky, but a humongous green dragon. "Wow!" gasped Raz excitedly.

"Hello. My name is Swift and I love flying as you can see by my name. My favourite place to rest and have a picnic is The Pink Cloud, also known as The God Of Clouds. Hop on my back and I'll show you!" boomed the voice of the green dragon, Swift.

"I never knew dragons were so kind!!!" grinned Raz, excited to explore the amazing Dragon realm. He scrambled up onto Swift's back and together they took off with great grins on their faces and as exhilarated as friends on a roller coaster. When Swift reached The Pink Cloud, he landed elegantly on the soft, billowing clouds and took out a basket of cookies, fish and mice. Raz loved the cookies!

When Raz got home, it was the holidays already; he found a dragon egg in his pocket! Uh - oh!!!

Judge's comment: I loved reading your story Tom, it really took me on a journey. I was very impressed by your descriptions of the characters and setting, and your creativity really shone through. I wish I could read about what happens next when the egg hatches! Well done Tom for a very enjoyable story!

Tom Leach

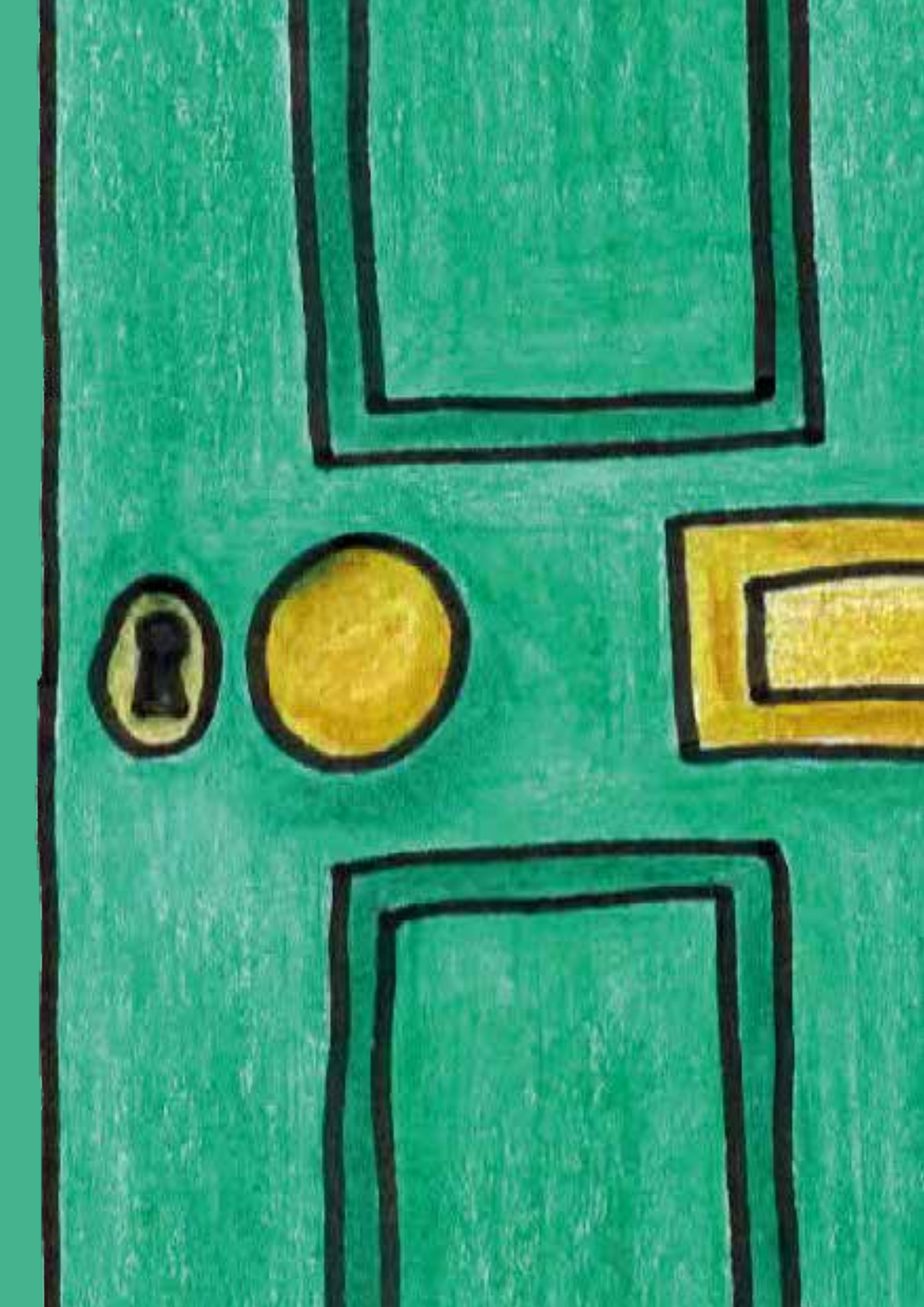
Year 4

Bowdon Church School

The background is a vibrant green with a fine, woven texture. In the center, there is a prominent yellow rectangular shape with a black outline, which has a smaller, slightly recessed yellow rectangle inside it, also with a black outline. Surrounding this central element are several other black-outlined rectangular shapes of varying sizes, some of which are partially cut off by the edges of the frame, creating a grid-like pattern.

Year 5

Commended
Writers



The Glow

Thud. He collapsed exhausted. Panic filled his chest. There was no escape. His mind flashed back to the warning sign at the edge of the lake, 'Danger-Do Not Swim in The Water!'

At the start of the day Jeffrey had found an unusual, green door hidden behind his grandma's broken-down shed, overgrown with thorny brambles and twisted ivy. Cautiously, he had turned the rusty knob and stepped through.

Gasping, his skin was now green, he had grown as tall as a basketball player but strangest of all, something was brushing the back of his legs. Nervously, he peered back over his shoulder and screamed, it was a tail!

His eyes darted around at the magnificent new world that surrounded him; a magical, glowing forest with strange looking plant life. High in the sky there were 3 full moons, casting hazy shadows through the trees over the forest floor. Jeffrey was normally afraid of the dark but all the plants were illuminated with a neon, fluorescent glow like they were coloured in using highlighters.

Jeffrey shook his head and pinched himself, he felt like all his senses had come alive: he could smell the scent of sweet mangoes, hear the distant sound of rushing water, taste the warm, humid air and feel the spongy floor beneath his feet like a gymnastics mat.

Eager to explore, Jeffrey could not believe how light footed and nimble he was now. Easily, he jumped high off the ground and his tail automatically curled around one branch to the next as he swung excitedly through the trees, "Woo Hoo!" he yelled.

After a while, sweat dripped from his forehead, his hands were clammy and his lips were dry. From the top of the trees, he spotted a turquoise lake with an inviting waterfall, it was irresistible. He took a full swing and jumped; horror filled his face as he saw the sign 'Danger -Do Not Swim In The Water! It was too late. His body shot through the surface like an arrow, it felt delicious. Immediately, he gulped the ice, cool water.

Suddenly, the ground rumbled, the trees creaked, the forest glow flickered. Jeffery's instincts told him to run, fast, back to the door and home where it was safe. He clambered out of the water and scrambled through the forest but kept slipping and tripping as the plants were grabbing at his legs. It was pitch-black now, he shivered and the hairs on the back of his neck stuck up, his fear of the dark had resurfaced.

Unbelievably, out of the corner of his eye he saw a faint glow. Shattered, he stretched out and grasped at this last hope of light with the last of his strength. Success! He threw it over the tangled vines that trapped his legs. To his relief they shriveled away, the neon lights twinkled and slowly returned.

Unsteadily, he stood up and stumbled back through the green door. That was it. He was free.

Judge's comment: Wow! What an incredible writer you are! Your use of language and description paint such a vibrant picture in the reader's mind that I felt that I too was exploring a strange, new world alongside Jeffrey! You have a real talent for storytelling, and I hope that this is the first of many stories I get to read by the exciting author, William Fox!

William Fox
Year 5
All Saints' Catholic Primary School

Sympathy for the Devil

The water was restless. It edged on, chewing to a nauseous, relentless rhythm. The wood swayed, prisoner to the wind. It was cool by the wood, the wind was cool too, singing softly across to the lake.

The sky was darker than dark, a blotch of ink across paper. The breeze laughed. Infectious laughter that caught like a disease, a disease with no cure.

A brisk cough echoed across the lake.

It was a night like no other and the Earth could feel it, feel every sharp gasp of breath. The Earth could feel. The Earth knew more than was possible. It was dangerously beautiful.

The lights of the city, so unaware, so foolish, stopped. It was a second. Then it was all over.

It was a simple. Oh.

A green door appeared from behind the clouds, its paint was peeling and ivy hung across the brass knocker. It creaked and a fingernail reached in, clad in grease it had a scarlet hue and screamed incarnadine. The earth had tried to warn the people; never again would the word failure fit so perfectly.

Lucy was defeated.

'You're a child from the devil,' the judge had said. 'You're evil.'

Maybe I am evil.

I'm nothing.

The window was barred and a crisp breeze floated in.

A huge eye bent down by the window it was steely and glinted in the moonlight showing every tinge of colour.

'Take me,' said Lucy. 'I'm not worth it anymore.'

'Yes, you are.' A voice said. 'You need me.'

'I was told by them that I wasn't good enough,' mumbled Lucy.

'Exactly.' The voice soothed. 'You were told by them, You are good enough, Lucy.'

A huge crushing noise was made and the remains of a flattened prison truck sank to the ground. Lucy was in the voice's palm. She looked up. It was the devil.

'Get away from me!' she shrieked timorously.

'I need your help.' It said softly. 'Those who judge by appearance are fools. Maybe at heart I'm different.'

'Please help.' The devil urged.

So, Lucy followed the devil across woodland before reaching a mound of grass that was embedded in soil. 'Look up.' The devil said. 'Always look up.'

A small green door was located above them in the sky. 'I can't get you up there.' Lucy said sadly.

'You're stronger than you think you are.' said the devil.

Lucy pushed the devil up with all her might into the night sky and the door slammed shut. Lucy looked at her arms; they were slim and not so strong. They were the same, but her mind was bright, flowing and confident.

A small crimson hair floated down in front of her.

Lucy grasped it tightly and murmured. 'Thank you, Devil.'

'Some people do need to have sympathy for the devil,' said Lucy staring up longingly.

Judge's comment: I have chosen this one because it actually made me open-mouthed with its mature writing and the complexity of the story. It is engaging and thought provoking and I felt that it is “complete” as a 500 word story. I feel like Pardis could be an author of the future.

Pardis Bassirian

Year 5

Oldfield Brow Primary School

Behind the Door

I gazed out my murky window assuming the green, wooden door would be sitting in its usual place with the strings of ivy camouflaged over it. As I looked, something caught my eye; a distinctive yellow butterfly flew across the hatchway. It made everything around it inadequate and bland compared to its beauty. I watched with perplexity at how it seemed to have brought life to every dead thing on the ground. That is when I saw...

I darted down the wooden stairs, my hair in my face. I reached the limpid door that lead on to the forest; the green ingress remained, standing there unscathed. My bare feet dodged the obstacles that lay on the scruffy grass. Looking into the distance, I noticed a small conflagration flickering over the pile of ashes on the floor. The butterfly? It was gone. As I reached the opening, a perk of curiosity filled my imagination. I bent down, resting my knees on the soft greenery. My eye met with the ignition but all I could see was darkness, creeping out from every corner. I was afraid of the dark, how it watched me at night. "I see you're intrigued?" whispered a squeaky voice that came from the surroundings behind me. "Whoever goes in, never comes out." I felt my hand become heavy and tired. A sharp substance pierced my finger. I looked down to look at my hand. Surprisingly, there was a tiny key sitting in my palm. I planted the key inside the door and walked into the best adventure I'd never forget.

As I walked into the room, my feet like jelly, the lights hanging from the shattered ceiling dimmed. The wall was covered in dusted fern that had brown, mouldy berries sitting on them.

I gagged at the thought of staying here. My hands were trembling. "well have ya rad tat magizen ye?" Said a grumpy voice that echoed around the expanse. My eyes drifted to the second voice. "Hold up Tommy, I can smeh sumthin" muttered the other voice. The footsteps of the mysterious creatures banged on the ground. I looked up gasping. My hand clapped to my mouth as I saw two ginormous giants leering down at me. "Ummm hi, I'm-" I tried to say but instead got swooped up by the first giant. "Please, don't I-" he stopped me from speaking. "She is tha wun" they said together.

I looked at them. Hypnotised by what they just said. "What do you mean?" I simply asked shaking my head. The second one looked at me, its bogies lingering down his nose. "Wel ya know da rule wir giants an trol, if we spotid near them den we dead."

"I don't follow." I said as he wiped his nose with his crumpled hand. The first one shook his oval head. He went to pick the key up, when seven trolls ran in... "Get the key!"

"RUN!" Shouted the giants. I ran forward and never looked back.

Judge's comment: I was really impressed with the structure and the vocabulary in this piece, and the way that Elvie had used dialect for the giants, which was really engaging and added a depth to the story. Not one of the 500 words she used was wasted and I really enjoyed reading it.

Elvie Millership
Year 5
Tyntesfield Primary School



The Escape of Azeroth

It began like any ordinary nightmare, darkness slowly but surely engulfing you and a mysterious yet familiar cackle echoing around the room. Sprinting in the opposite direction, you daren't look back. However, Alexa ceased to a halt as an unusual, green door sheltered by swirling, ancient ivy and illuminated by a glistening moon stood sturdily in front of her. Creak! It steadily opened, revealing a portal labelled Azeroth. The land of Evil. Heart in her throat, Alexa tried walking away but her legs disobeyed and trudged towards it...

Whoosh! A violent sea of fluorescent colours rushed by - rogue reds, ballistic blues, witty whites, patient purples and passionate pinks. At first, everything seemed peculiar, until a flashing light appeared at the end of the everlasting void. This was Azeroth. The land of Evil. Plumes of smoke had overshadowed the sky, cruel citizens wandered the streets aimlessly and no - parent - super - vision. To Alexa, this had seemed like a dream she was willing to stay in, however she had already devoured all of her delectable treats and had rummaged for snacks everywhere, none of them seemed suitable for a 13 - year old. "What is a little girl doing 'ere, vis ain't no place for kids!" questioned an annoyed stranger. "Oh, I'm terribly sorry, you see I came here through that portal and I am truly desperate to return, please may you help me, kind sir?" queried Alexa innocently. He replied, "First of all, we don't allow poshy - woshies in 'ere, and second of all, you askin' the wrong person, find Witty Will and he'll lead the way." She thanked him and set off to find this so called Witty Will.

As an intelligent adolescent, she knew she would have to face numerous challenges to find him. Correct she was, upon her path were poisonous forests, boiling deserts, bottomless pits and icy glaciers until she finally arrived at a minute shack (far too small for any race of life to live in) and cautiously opened the door to find...

A dead body!!! Using her forensic instincts, Alexa came to a conclusion that someone had deliberately murdered him to make sure that she never returned. Surely she was capable enough to return home safely, alone. Travelling back to the heart of Azeroth required the same journey as before, all the same obstacles to face once again. Unexpectedly, guards paraded the

portal entrance, someone needed her to stay in Azeroth, but who and why? Alexa's question was soon to be answered as an inscrutable man - commonly known as Shadow - appeared, clearly he knew that there had to be a specific amount of people on Earth and by keeping Alexa behind, Shadow could replace her and his arrival on Earth would go unnoticed. Alexa cleverly disguised herself as one of Shadow's trusted companions, leaped into the portal as he approached and it instantly shut behind her. Sweating, Alexa woke with a start and realised it was only a nightmare, or was it?...

Judge's comment: I really enjoyed reading Talia's 500 word story. Her introduction immediately drew me in - her use of language is fantastic! Talia's ability to show different characters through dialogue is excellent. I am very curious to find out what Shadow will do next! Well done Talia!

Talia Abdelaal
Year 5
Bollin Primary School

The Mirror to Another World

Elizabeth tightened her corset, getting ready for the adventure ahead exploring the untended part of the garden. She laced up her stiff, brown leather boots and hurriedly set off to the farthest part of her family's estate.

She walked past a vast stone wall when she noticed an area covered in tangled ivy. Intrigued, she pushed it away hoping to see something beneath and wasn't disappointed when she found an old, green wooden door. Elizabeth nervously turned the rusty handle.

She stumbled back, shocked. There was nothing there, just a mirror in the doorframe, her reflection staring back at her. Startled, she cautiously leant in to look closer, as she did her reflection distorted like a ripple on a pond. Elizabeth reached out her hand and it sank straight into the surface, quickly she was engulfed in a silvery, silken swirl and her whole body was dragged in.

She came to in the middle of a forest next to a ramshackle cabin. The door was ajar, she crept inside hoping to find some answers. The inside reflected the exterior; there was very little space with clothes and rubbish dumped everywhere. She waded through the knee-deep filth when something caught her eye. A photograph of herself in a silver frame, quickly she scrambled over to it. It was definitely her, the same flame red hair and emerald eyes only a messier, wilder version. Suddenly the door behind her creaked open...

As she turned, she couldn't believe her eyes, it was her doppelganger from the picture. "What are you doing here?" asked the girl menacingly.

"Uhhhhhh, I was lost, and stumbled into your lovely abode" Elizabeth stammered trying to make up an excuse.

The girl stared at her, grinning maliciously as the realisation of their likeness struck her. Elizabeth wanted to run, her feeling of uneasiness brewing just like the storm outside but she had so many questions. She took a deep breath, "Who are you, why do you look like me, why do you live here?" she garbled nervously.

"My name is Eliza, I don't know, and I live here because I have no choice, my parents are dead, people don't tend to stick around me for long" Eliza smirked menacingly, leaving Elizabeth to wonder how exactly her parents had met their end.

Their lives were the exact opposite, Elizabeth's full of her family, joy and happiness, Eliza's full of sadness and despair.

Elizabeth had an ominous feeling that nothing good would come of staying, she knew she had to leave despite the millions of questions she had. She turned to go but Eliza had other ideas, she advanced on her, knife in hand. Elizabeth screamed and her world turned black.

Stepping through the portal the red-haired girl grinned to herself laughing manically as she ran to the house and loving parents, a perfect life. No one would ever know.

Eliza skipped sweetly across the lawn the knife hidden in her dress pocket ready to take her place in Elizabeth's world.

Judge's comment: I thoroughly enjoyed reading Emily's 500 word story. She is able to create vivid scenes through a very sophisticated use of language; the plot flowed seamlessly, leaving the reader with a desire to find out what would happen next. Emily is clearly a very talented writer.

Emily Bennett

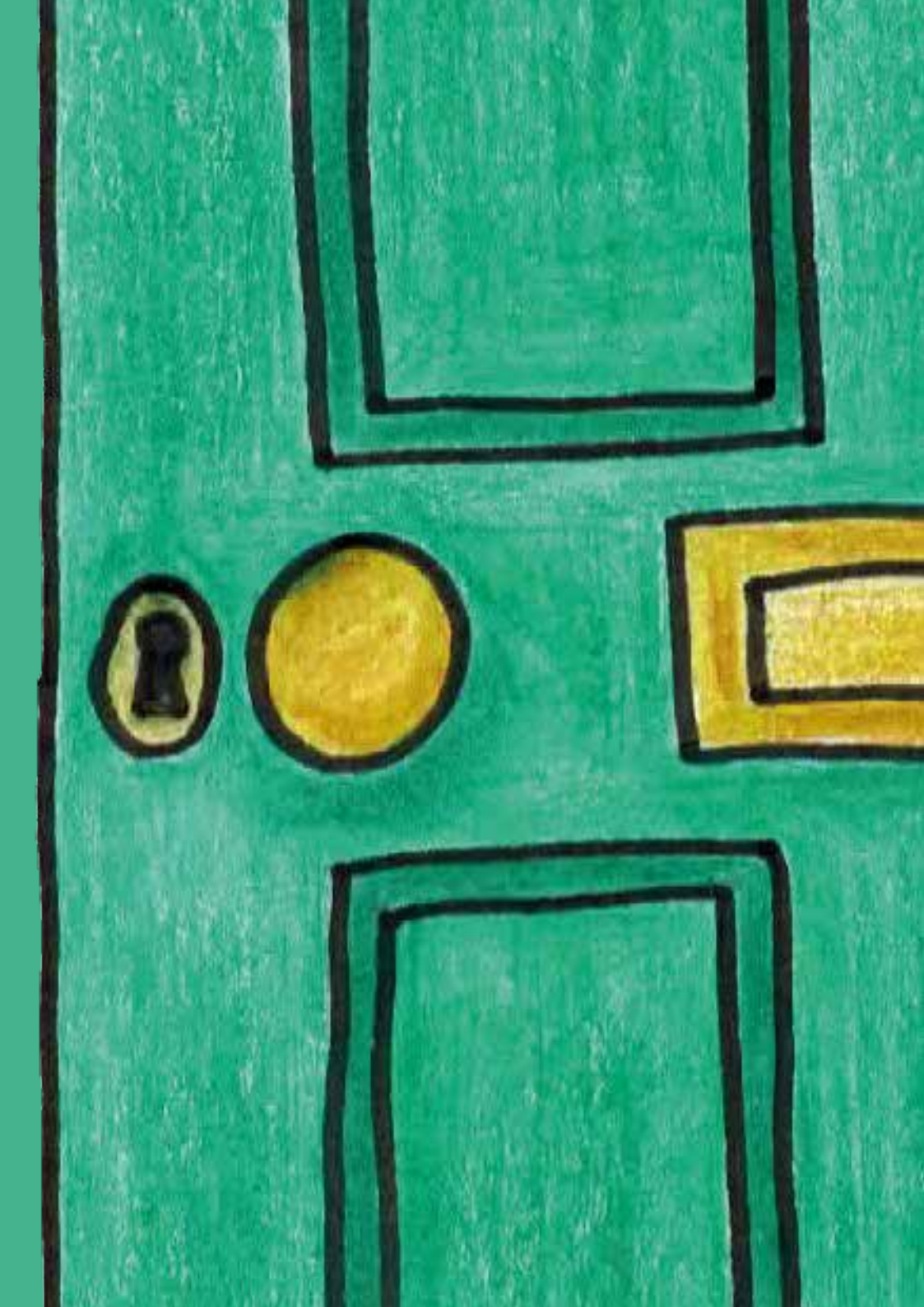
Year 5

Oldfield Brow Primary School

The background is a vibrant green with a fine, woven texture. In the center, there is a prominent yellow rectangular shape with a black outline, which has a smaller, slightly recessed yellow rectangle inside it, also with a black outline. Surrounding this central element are several other black-outlined rectangular shapes of varying sizes, some of which are partially cut off by the edges of the frame, creating a grid-like pattern.

Year 6

Commended
Writers



It's Always There

I knew it wasn't going to be an ordinary morning the moment I stepped outside, ready to face the day. The wind on my cheeks was damper and less refreshing than usual. What was so different about today? Then I spotted it. Something that wasn't there before. It's peeling paint and rusty hinges suggested it'd been there forever, but it hadn't- that was impossible. Someone would have noticed a bright green door. Looking closer, I decided to brush it off as a trick of the light, but inside, there was a bubbling cauldron of unease threatening to tip over.

By sunrise the next day, any fears of the door had disappeared and so had the door! Unburdened, I traipsed downtown to meet with friends. I know every inch of this place; every fruit stall, stray dog, pothole and loose tile everything except for one door the same iry-green door!

It can't be. My blood ran cold. All air evaporated from my lungs. The world was swimming before my eyes. I turned and ran. And ran. And ran until I couldn't any longer. When I took in my surroundings I found myself in the park. The presence of the trees calmed me, as if they could protect me from my fears and insecurities. Yet something still felt wrong. Because there, shrouded in darkness in the corner of my eye is the silhouette of a padlock hanging next to a wooden handle riveted onto rotting panels of wood. "Oh no" whimpered the timid little voice in my head "but HOW!". Stumbling backwards, I exited the park. It's like it's following me.

Every day since, it's lingered in the corner of my eye, driving me mad with fear. It's everywhere. Never in the same place. Until it landed back where it all began. The first place where I set eyes upon the door. Miraculously, the door stayed there! It had left me alone, after weeks of torment and sleepless nights. It had been there for so long, towering over me like a gargantuan problem. Though ... over time, my fear had reduced, faded into the background. I had long figured I could easily overcome my fear by simply opening the door but I had tried to avoid that option but now I can dodge it no longer ... I have to open the door.

The door seemed to know I was ready because as I approached the padlock unlocked and fell to the floor. It's handle was cold to the touch and cool

against my clammy skin. Taking several deep breaths, I twisted the handle. I was right to be scared because waiting behind the door was darkness. A swirling hole of terror, anger and everything in between, threatening to suck me in. With pure fear and shattered nerves, I lost all hope of escaping and let myself be pulled in. As I got consumed by the darkness, I saw the door slam shut behind me and disappear, off on a journey to search for its next poor victim.

Judge's comment: A superb story that holds multiple meanings on so many levels. You have used beautiful imagery to create this clever piece of writing.

By Nicole Clark

Year 6

St.Mary's C of E Primary School

Finding Hope

Robbie was crying. She was huddled in the doorway of her home, flanked by trees on a spring-scented street.

Abruptly, a shadow fell across her.

"Why do you cry, child?" an odd-looking woman with tightly-plaited, iron hair stepped out of a tiger-drawn carriage.

Robbie frowned, then replied, "My brother is sick."

"The solution is to see the doctor," the lady informed briskly, sweeping her velvety berry robe over the pavement to come closer.

"What if the doctor doesn't know what to do?" Robbie stuck out her tongue.

"Then your brother has been hit by a drakeman-plant, in which case, you would do better to open that door."

"That door?" Robbie queried, pointing at an average-sized door, incredulous. But the lady had vanished...

Robbie stared at the door. It was emerald, with a heart carved into it at about the height of her forehead. The wall around it was smothered with smooth bottle-green ivy. It appeared ordinary, except the fact that a heavy padlock barred all entrances. Robbie resolutely yanked a pin from her bronze hair: the job couldn't take more than a few well-worth minutes.

After many hours of cursing, picking and cursing some more, the door creaked open.

Robbie faced a brick wall. For a few moments she stared at it in disbelief. Then, sobbing uncontrollably, she fell to the ground, grief seeping through her. She had wasted the last hours of her small, funny, lovably annoying brother's life. It was over. Hope drained from her body, and suddenly, she felt a thousand years old.

Light spilled out from the foliage surrounding the timber door.

"Come on, we haven't got all night, your little sister's driving me up the wall again and we have to get that soup going..." a large, creamy mouse with pearly whiskers was standing in a minute doorway that was whittled straight into the icy-ravaged wall..

"I'm coming, Mum!" appearing from a second door higher up, a chocolatey-brown, soft-pelted mouse slid down the vines, carrying a miniature string bag.

"Oh, hello dear, I suppose you're here for the drakeman cure? Good, listen carefully: down the road there is an oak tree, climb right to the top and you should find the Magpie Owl. You must then answer his riddle if you want the antidote," the creamy mouse told her matter-of-factly.

Robbie blinked. She blinked again. Then, she ran.

Robbie's hair was tangled, her arms were scratched, her legs were aching.

"Whooo goes there?" came a deep, cultured voice.

"It's Robbie- I-I'm here for the drakeman antidote," she sounded braver than she felt.

"Hence the riddle!"

"Ok, what is this riddle?" Robbie inquired.

"Burden or blessing?"

Skill, knowledge and hope guide

A constant fight to save me,

Reigning over this light-filled globe,

Before me lies naught, after unknown,

What am I?" The riddle flowed through the owl's beak like a solemn river of knowledge slowly flooding a town....

"Life?"

Doof!

A crystal flask appeared. Her brother was safe. She sprinted towards the hospital.

Judge's comment: This story hooked me from the start. The vocabulary is extraordinary and it has echoes of fantasy fiction in the style of Tolkein. A superb effort!

Diana Currioni
Year 6
King's Road Primary School



The Life of a Broccoli

I am freezing. Seriously. I've been sat in this freezing-cold, pitch-black hellhole for at least a week now. I'm not strong enough to push the door open to get out and if I did, where would I go? Everybody hates me. I remember my home; growing next to the green door surrounded by ivy. That was the dream. But now, I'm trapped here with stupid Carrot, who is the most boring food in the world. He makes jokes (that are soooo not funny) and laughs at them! He has the dullest conversations, and he tastes horrible, so I believe. I've seen parents try to get kids to eat him and they won't. Fla. Annoyingly, Carrot can see in the dark because he has this thingymajiggy that he gives people when they eat him so they can see better in the dark, but he can see perfectly in this fridge that we're stuck in.

The only time I see people or light (which I, personally, prefer to weird people) is when Dan, Kate or their kid Masie opens the fridge and takes something like Cheese (the biggest show-off ever) to eat. Whenever Cheese comes back, he just boasts about being the only tasty food, which then provokes Flam into saying she's the only tasty food and they continue to bicker. I remember when Cheese and Flam had a wrestling match and we all perched on different shelves, leaving one free for them so we could watch. Flam and Cheese turned the fridge upside-down. There was food everywhere and one of the shelves cracked and broke. *Gasp*. I know right. A shelf actually broke; that's like a food's worse nightmare. That wrestling match was the only exciting thing that has ever happened in this boring fridge.

While I was daydreaming, I didn't realise Kate open the fridge until the blinding light struck me.

"Happened again, didn't it, Broc?" Onion asked.

"Yeah," I squeaked. Every time the fridge opens, the light blinds me and makes me (don't tell anyone) pee my pants - well, stalk (I basically leak, broccoli-wise). I know, I know. I'm not proud of it. Onion's the only one who knows since he's my one friend as people hate onions as well as me, Broccoli.

I waited to see who Kate would take this time. Me. What? Wait, she chose me! She brought me out the fridge and out of the corner of my eye, I saw Cheese's shocked face. Fla. Finally.

I saw the pan, ready for me to bathe in its boiling water. Yes! I've never felt so happy. She dropped me in, and I started to cook.

When I was ready, she served me on a plate to give to Masie, who refused to eat me. No, please eat me! If she didn't, I'd have to go back to the fridge! And that, I did not want to do. But she just refused, and refused and, sadly, Kate gave in! So, back to the boring fridge, I went.

Judge's comment: I love how Alice creates such a vibrant character out of that most mundane of cruciferous vegetables - the humble broccoli! This is a very entertaining and well-crafted story that I thoroughly enjoyed reading.

Alice Paisley

Year 6

St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

The Battle

Bill had always fought alongside friends, but the war was hell. He had been fighting for several months; taken up defensive positions in the canopy; started rationing salad (his favourite food); and been hiding for his life. The enemy were closing in. Slowly and carefully, hesitantly and cautiously, he took a risky glance out in the dangerous, damp air. Luckily, there was nothing there but soggy, empty space. "All clear," whispered Bill to his comrade.

Down the line of soldiers, the sergeant reported that there were shrieking, blood-curdling war screeches being heard overhead, and how many had lost their lives. Bill had a sickening, despairing feeling, so he closed his eyes (he didn't want to look because some of the dead might be his family). Bill, who was now ready, made his move, and slowly crept under the green canopy, but hid - a dark, menacing shadow loomed over-head.

Screams filled the air. The world around him slowed down. Sadness, despair, shock - which would get him first? Broken shells were strewn everywhere. He had lost, and the end was nigh. Needle-like talons closed around his belly and he was lifted into the air. He knew that he was going to die a long, agonising death, but still he struggled, he struggled because his life depended on it....

If Bill had been weak, if he had been terrible at slithering, if he had been puny, then he would not have escaped the claws of death. But he squirmed, and fell.

Everything was astonishing up here; he could see the ivy where he had been undercover, and the dreaded bird-feeders where the enemy ate. He could see the lawn where in his younger days he'd played with his friends. Bill, plummeted toward the ground.

With a loud 'thump' he landed, bruised and bumped, but not dead (slugs are invertebrates after all). It was a green door that he landed on. Out in the open. Bill thought to himself that his time had come. Multiple feathery shadows fell over him. The sound of flapping vibrated through

the wood. He couldn't slither away in time. His comrades watched from the cover of the ivy in utter horror as the sparrow dive-bombed towards Bill with its beak open.

"Please no, this can't be happening," whispered Bill in a terrified tone. Then there was silence...

Judge's comment: Lex has written a superbly-controlled story here, where the identity of the narrator is concealed until the very end. Making a reader emote for a slug is pretty impressive!!

Lex Lane
Year 6
Flixton Primary School

The Getaway

I ran away... far, far, far, away...

My hair flying behind me, trying to fight the strong wind which was slowing me down. My throat was desperately gasping for air, whilst my feet were thudding against the muddy, wet ground using up all my energy. I couldn't turn back, not now. Who knows when she would come back, every second was precious.

My eyes were longingly looking around trying to seek a place to rest. All I could hear were the shouts of children all around me, drowning my thoughts. I could not stand the noise, my head was throbbing horribly.

Suddenly, my legs came to an abrupt stop. Finally somewhere to rest! In front of me, was a large, dark green bush. I crouched down behind it, slowly inhaling the fresh air that I had been longing for. Then, I looked in all directions to check if the coast was clear. I had the shock of my life when I tumbled backwards through something...

There, right behind me, was a large, wooden, green door covered in moss! Trying to gather my thoughts, I stood up looking around. I could hear the murmur of voices from behind the door. All around me was darkness, creeping over this gloomy place. Ahead, I could see the silhouette of what looked like a cave. I could not give up now. This could be an advantage. Then I begin sprinting like I had never done before. The voices were edging nearer. In the distance behind me, I could see the shadows of chasers. Quickly and quietly, I ran into the cave. Cobwebs were hanging above me, bats were flying around in distress because of the intruder. My footsteps echoed around the cave. I ran deeper and deeper into the cave until I thought that my lungs were going to be starved of oxygen. Then I came to a turn and in front of me were two paths. Either way would take me deeper into the cave. But which one would take me to safety? Left or right? My brain was just full of distant thoughts, spinning around, all muddled up. I would have to act fast. With that, I summoned all my confidence and went right and didn't look back. Time was ticking, I felt my legs giving in. Oh no! In front of me was a dead-end. I was done for. I would have to give in. Suddenly, out of nowhere a voice shouted "Found you, you're it!"

Judge's comment: A well-told and pacy story with a brilliant twist at the end, which I did not see coming. Very cleverly structured - manipulating the reader in this way is not easy!

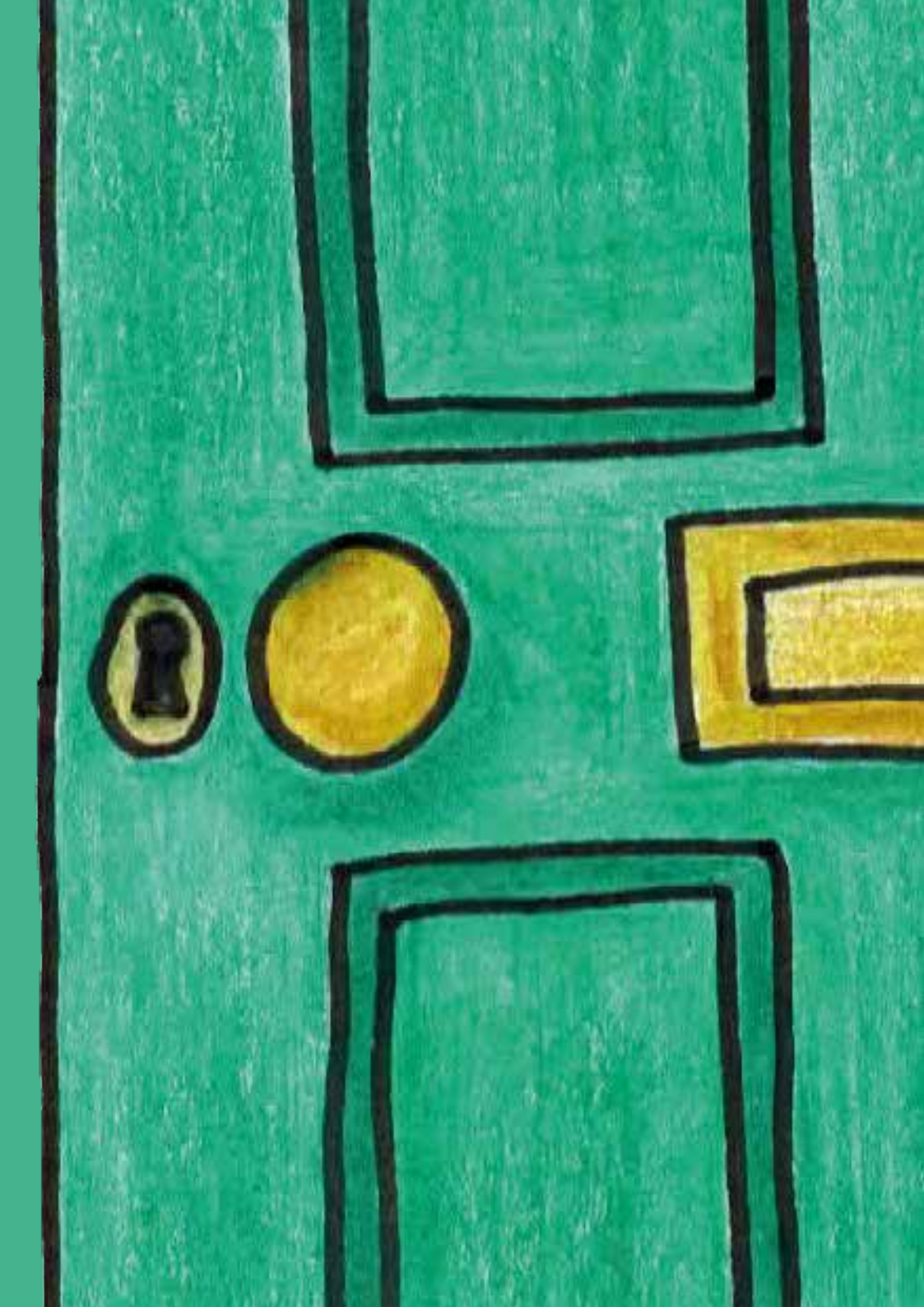
By Nilanthi Stone

Year 6

Bowdon Church School



**Thanks
and
acknowledgements**



I would like to thank Kamila Shamsie, for agreeing to support this competition and participate in the Awards' Ceremony. This had made this event particularly exciting for the children and adults involved.

I would also like to thank Jonny Huck from Seed, Manchester University for his enthusiasm, support and help during this project and for agreeing for Manchester University to be the main sponsors. I would also like to thank Antony Dillon from Wilmott Dixon Construction for the generous sponsorship of the winning school's library. This will make a difference to a lot of children. Further to this I would like to thank Nicola Dodd from Spotlight Drama for agreeing to create a film of one of the winning pieces. It is a lovely prize, to see a piece of writing brought to life in a piece of drama. Finally, I would like to thank Lucy() from WHS for generously sponsoring individual prizes for the children.

Of course, this competition could not have gone ahead without people kindly agreeing to give up their time to judge the entries. I would therefore like to thank all of the second tier Judges:

James Wilkinson
Clare Walls
Zoe Davies
Jenny Dutton
Victoria Johnson
Sam Thompson

Etienne Swinnen
Honor Nicholson
Kerry Harrison
Harriet Jarvis
Laura Crocker

You have all been brilliant and so supportive. I especially need to thank Sam and Vicky, who have gone out of their way to support this entire process. I'm so grateful!

Thank you to Rebecca Phillips of Manchester University, for allowing the PGCE students to participate in the judging. They have all been so diligent. It has been an honour to have worked with them and I hope that they benefitted too!

I would also like to thank the first tier Judges, Rebecca Grant (Manchester University) and David Savill (Salford University) for agreeing to judge the final winning entries. I would also like to thank Rebecca for the splendid job she made of the virtual creative writing session, which supported the competition. This was so exciting as it gave approximately 700 children access to a live session in the middle of lockdown. I'll never forget the excitement this generated!

Thank you also, to John Nish, Trafford School Improvement Partner, for keeping all the Head's updated in his Weekly Bulletins and also for agreeing to take part in the Awards' Ceremony.

Thank you also to Alice Richardson who has kindly designed all of the beautiful certificates for each level of achievement and the front cover of this anthology.

Best Wishes
Wendi

Thank you to all the schools, who took part. The quality of the writing was incredibly high and all the children and the their teachers should proud of their submissions.

Well done to:

Wellfield Junior School
Well Green Primary School
Victoria Park Junior School
Tyntesfield Primary School
Stamford Park Junior School
St Hugh's Primary School
St Vincent's Catholic Primary School
St Mary's C of E Sale
St Mary's C of E Davyhulme
St Margaret Ward Primary School
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
St Hugh of Lincoln Catholic Primary School
St Hilda's Primary School
St Anne's C of E Primary School
Springfield Primary School
Seymour Park Community School
St. Monica's Catholic Primary School
Park Road Primary School
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School
Oldfield Brow Primary School
Moss Park Junior School
Moorlands Junior School
Lime Tree Primary Academy
King's Road Primary School
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Highfield Primary School
Flixton Primary School
Firs Primary School
English Martyrs Catholic Primary School
Elmridge Primary School
Clover Lea Primary School

Broadheath Primary School
Bowdon Church School
Bollin Primary School
Altrincham C of E Primary School
All Saints' Catholic Primary School

Edited and compiled by W.Swan

