

Boy on the Edge by Caroline Bracken (Winner Adult)
after Simon Armitage

His eyes were foil milk bottle tops
pecked open by scavenging magpies
his speech was word-salad
tossed and drenched with French dressing
His hand was an anchor tethered
to an invisible ship in a storm
his neurons scrambled egg
sprinkled with pepper and salt
His thoughts were popcorn kernels
bursting in a microwave oven
his dreams were a London Tube map
thrown in a tumble dryer stuck on hot
His feet were urban foxes at night
scavenging in a dumpster
his skin was a swarm of Cuban crabs
crawling on orange legs to the Bay of Pigs
His nails were a yellow danger sign
at the edge of a vertical cliff
his anger was the imprint of an iron
burned on a white cotton sheet
His clothes were graffiti on the walls
of an abandoned warehouse
his reasoning was a kite on a string
whipped by the wind from a child's grasp
His regrets were unexploded WWII bombs
at the bottom of the ocean
The woman who visited him
was a replica of his mother as a ceramic cat
But her high-pitched miaow and pointy ears
didn't fool him and his Ma would never dress like that all in black
the next time she purred he planned to smash her into pieces
and superglue her back together the shape of his real mother

Flower Moon, Redesdale: May 2020 by Angela Finn (Runner Up Adult)

I wake not knowing which way I'm facing -
the door has moved. Through thin white layers,
curtain and blind, the night is luminous.

Downstairs, the kitten mewls.

Angular light spills from the fridge.
I pour milk into her dish
watch little pink tongue lap.

Fruit flies hover over the plate
destined for the compost bin –
banana skin, mandarin peel, lime slices.

I take the plate to the front garden.

Above the terraced houses, the sky
is Prussian blue
 a Japanese woodcut; full flower moon
a flat cream disc.

The wooden garden furniture
is all odd angles, an unsolved theorem.
 Yellow streetlight fizzes on a water
glass. A light breeze
carries scent, floral, familiar.

I am back in my childhood garden
my father saying, *come on,*
come outside, smell the night-scented phlox.
I throw my teenage eyes to heaven.

I remember the little phlox flowers, white
wheels with red hubs, remember strawberry plants –
running, sprawling across soil ridges

sweet pea with delicate tendrils,
 curling, searching
 for a wire to cling to.

I don't dream him often.

He shows up now and then
a passenger in my car,
smelling of cigarette smoke,
petrol-soaked overalls.

The Sky's Ever-Changing Colour by Eva Coady Age 16 (Winner Young Adult)

Eat, sleep, work, repeat,
It's the same thing every day.
By week two there's no more books to read
We've run out of games to play.

The same fake stories are recycled
On the news again and again
It's like we're stuck in a repeating time loop
Of a day that never seems to end.

The only thing that changes
From one day to another
Is the weather outside the window
The sky's ever-changing colour.

I feel a strange excitement
As I pull up the blind,
A strange thrill goes through me
As I wonder what weather I will find.

Today dawn paints threads of amber
Across a cornflower sky
Soon the sun is shining overhead
The low clouds drifting by.

The afternoon melts into evening
White sunlight softening to an amber glow
It's like looking at the world through a vintage filter
Shadows grow longer as the sun sinks low

Twilight is a watercolour painting
Indigo mingled with saffron and rose
The sharpened silhouettes of trees and houses
Signal the day has come to a close.

Night is a stretch of obsidian,
Soon the moon begins to ascend
The infinite blackness goes on forever
With no clear beginning, and no end.

The yellow orb of light rises higher
Stars begin to appear
The faraway specks of hope
Seem to say "We'll always be here".

It's the same sky outside my grandfather's hospital room
He's too weak to use his phone
But somehow, it's comforting that he can see the stars, too
And feel that he's not so alone.

Ceramics Class By Charlie Roycroft Byrne, Age 15 (Runner up Young Adult)

Putty in your hands,
Our minds are moulded by your actions
Our thinks and our dos and our says
And our passions.

But hardened clay cracks under attempts at correction,
Splitting ravines when you pry for perfection.

While you may shape us
As a life shapes a tomb,
As a pen shapes a letter,
As a light shapes a room,

You don't make us,
As the earth makes sand,
As love makes lovers
As does music make a band.

Every child is a gift,
Not to the bearers but the world,
A gift given when clay hardens,
And it's wings are unfurled.

Lockdown by Frances Browner (Winner Haiku)

on an empty pier
waves crash, gulls cry
dreaming of cherry blossom

West Pier Dun Laoghaire by Caroline Bracken (Runner up Haiku)

boats shelter in place
empty fish crates stacked
on the quay

The Glass Box By Eva Valentina Mulvee, aged 9 years (Winner Under 12's)

My toes push
into the cool garden grass
It's the daily stretch with Joe.
But my mind can't escape the daily deaths.
I try not to think of my grandparents getting Coronavirus or waving through glass.

I see my friends through screens. Flat and pixilated.
I dislike how the world feels now. Out of reach.
On our walks past the Lexicon, my parents tell me to stay away from others, stay apart.
Things are so different now.

The radio news talks about coronavirus nonstop.
I kick stones into the water by Dun Laoghaire pier. Come on slowcoach, my dad shouts

The shops have glass separating us. We have to sit in the car when mum goes in, our fingers
make designs on the sweaty windows. I try to make my sister smile.

I wish I knew what happens next. When will it come to an end? I'm tired of looking out
windows.

The Spirit that wasn't there by Daniel Grant Age 11 (Runner Up Under 12's)

I strode down the hallway,
Everything was bare,
It was so quiet,
The doors seemed to stare.

No boys in the classroom,
No pictures on the walls,
There was no sound,
No - nothing at all.

The Hall is now empty,
The paint pots run dry.
The 6th class boys -
no chance for 'goodbye'.

I spent so much time here,
My Spirit never left,
Missing the sounds,
It just feels like theft.

When this is all over,
I'll make myself known,
The 'Spirit of Holly Park' -
through the boys I'll be shown.