

First Story
National Writing Competition Longlist
Key Stage Three

A Homeless Person's Plea

Grace Atkinson, Ribblesdale High School

I don't sleep in a warm soft bed,
I don't eat at a table.
I don't relax with a roof over my head,
My home isn't a stable.

You might sometimes catch a glimpse of me,
When you pass by my home,
Tucked up in my cardboard,
Desperately alone.

You strut past with your designer bags,
Your cars choking me with their exhaust,
Your old copper penny dropped in to my lap,
And only because you feel forced.

Would you treat me like this if I had a home?
I think you might still pretend I'm shadows,
Would you still veer away like I might bite?
Or would you maybe comfort my woes?

That's the problem with you people,
You pretend nothing is wrong,
You might wish you could help me,
But it never lasts very long.

I hear you muttering as you walk past,
I see you pull your children as far away as you may,
I hear you tell the jokes at my expense,
And I watch as you hurry away.

I know you think I'm a lay about,
A good for nothing: a useless tool,
But I watch you pass by every day,
And I tell you I'm nobody's fool.

I may have had a bad start in life,
But that doesn't mean I'll have a bad end,
I need you to help me, more than you know,
A helping hand I wish you'd lend.

I do like in the darkness,
And I'm afraid that's where I might stay,
Because I'm the girl without a home,
Every night and every day.

HOMEmade Pie

Phoenix Bergman, Acland Burghley.

Rich whole brick house packed with love, laughter and cool stuff. We've added comics and a hint of Minecraft for a twist which turns out a really great home, enough for a whole family.

Ingredients

For the home crust - which holds the house together

125g/4oz being myself

125g/4oz my dog jumping on me in the morning

150g/5oz mum's smile and hug when I get home from school

30g of light bright space with sunlight streaming through the big windows

1 free-range bedroom where I always want to return and where my things are in their place.

For the filling – the warm nice gooey centre which is where you feel the most comfortable

850g/1lb 14oz Feeling warm and safe inside

25g/1oz fun reading my comics, science and maths

1 tbsp fighting demons and monsters on Hampstead Heath

2 best friends to hang out with, laugh and make cool comics

3 relaxing moments playing Minecraft, maybe more

100g/3½oz of smelling wet earth and raindrops on my face

175g/6oz nice things to eat

2 tbsp chopped fresh calmness

250ml/9fl oz clean rooms

Preparation method

Fill the house with love and it becomes a home. Put the negativity and irritations in a food processor and blend until the mixture resembles happy thoughts. Add the bad moods from school and the grumpiness until the mixture just comes together as a dough. Bring the dough together and flatten into a smooth and calm state of mind.

Put the homework in the centre of a 20cm/8in springform 12 year old and carefully encourage it over the base and up the sides of the potential.

Cook the talent in the brain until it's outstanding and extraordinary. Melt mum's heart with good chores and get extra time on video games.

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C (fan)/Gas 6.

Spoon the filling mixture into the house. Pour over the love and kindness and a few rules, allow it to drizzle down between the layers. Sprinkle the remaining cosy goodness on top.

Place the tin on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 40-45 minutes, or until everything is golden.

Leave the *Homemade Pie* to cool in the tin for 10 minutes. Remove the pie from the tin and place it on a serving plate. Cut into thick wedges with a sharp knife.

Home is not just the place you live - it's the place you feel most comfortable... *Enjoy*

Preparation time

Less than 30 mins.

Cooking time

Variable: from a moment to a lifetime.

Serves 2, with plenty left over for the dog.

Home

Jamie Croucher, The Albany School

Rats scamper around me, following the light that emanates from my lamp. My feet are swimming in my boots, surrounded by muddy water that has mellowed for at least three days. The barbed wire props up my rifle beside me, ready to defend at any moment. It has been quiet since this evening, the enemy at bay until dawn. It is almost twilight and the dancing trees have settled for the night. Most of us are asleep now, but Jones is still cradling his pistol within his arms; it is almost as if he has developed an emotional bond to war. He received the telegram last week, confirming the deaths of his wife and son. It is almost as if a part of him is missing, stolen by a single bomb that had changed everything within a second. He feels like it is his duty to gain vengeance against anybody who opposes him and that it is every single German's fault that his wife and son's lives have been taken from him.

I produce a crumpled piece of parchment from the top pocket of my fatigues and stare at it: the handwriting's that of my wife's, with our children Peter and Elizabeth's signature concluding the letter. I press it against my lips and savour the taste of home, my heart engulfed purely by the memories. A rusty paperclip attaches a family portrait to it and I gaze upon how life used to be.

A salty teardrop runs down the side of my cheek and drips onto the paper. I am a cold-blooded killer and there was no way of avoiding the guilt; I had killed for my country, but I had still taken another person's precious life.

It is the third year of conflict now; I had entered a boy and will hopefully leave the same. Others joined for fun, but I had signed up for the cause – for the cause of fighting for my King and country and not to impress my wife. I would not let this change me. My friends had fallen before my very eyes and I simply could not let their sacrifice go to waste.

My brother is awaiting his transportation home to be confirmed. He was fighting in Lille, France when his left leg was severed off by an incoming bomb shell. The shrapnel had torn through his knee cap and the loss of blood left him unconscious. Sgt Connor tracked his position for me about two weeks ago, but said that he would still be awaiting proper medical care for at least another 12 hours.

I was scared for him, though I had my own dilemmas to overcome; we had been trapped in the same old trench for the best part of three weeks and the powdered food was running low. Those who had built up the courage to sprint at the enemy were either dead or about to be – we had no room for prisoners and neither did they.

It was Elizabeth's birthday today, the 14th June, 17:07 on a Tuesday evening. She is 5 today and I am not there to witness the grin on her face as she opens my mother's china doll. My wife wanted me to save it until I returned, but I asked her to pass it down in case I do not. I can imagine her face now: rosy red cheeks, bright blue eyes and her dark brown hair braided into a neat plat on her left shoulder and finished with the red ribbon I had given to her on my departure. She would wear her petite creamy pumps, her white socks with floral patterns on the pleat and the subtle pink dress that her mother had worn as a child. She had made slight variations with the design, of course.

I shook my head vigorously, clearing the thoughts from my mind and focusing on the job I was assigned. I could not let my emotions tear me apart. Through all the bloodbaths and stalking sights; through all the screams and nervous laughter, I simply could not give in. I would not be blinded by hatred and fear to such an extent that I cannot see the ones who love me the most. There are no

winner in warfare and it is not war until you have lost someone you loved or who loved you... We all know it though, all of us, deep down inside, behind the stern faces, behind the masks we wear.

My House

Opal Florey, The Oxford Academy

In my house, things change
just like the seasons do.
Everyone is kind of peculiar,
one minute caring, one minute not.
Let's see how peculiar my family is,
shall we?

In my house, when it's August
my parents complain about the heat
my sisters complain about what to wear
my brother visits more
and everyone treats me the same,
even though I'm one year older.

In my house, when it's December
my parents complain about no heat
my sisters complain about Christmas decorations
my brother visits less
and everyone ignores me again,
probably because I'm the loudest.

In my house, when it's August
my birthday shows up and slaps me in the face
my parents give me less stuff but more money
my sisters bicker about my clothes
my brother says I'm a chav
and yet again I get treated the same,
even when I try my hardest.

In my house, when it's December
Christmas shows up and punches me in the stomach
my parents care about my enjoyment less and less
my sisters say I'm a weirdo for liking the cold
my brother says I'm too old for presents now
and once again I'm treated the same,
even when I eat everyone's pudding.

In my house, on August 5th
my parents terrorise me
my sisters clothe me
my brother ignores me
and I'm treated the same,
even when I'm incredibly loud.

In my house, on December 25th
my parents are robots
my sisters disturb my sleep
my brother only cares for food
and I'm treated the same,
even when I steal the food.

Oh well – I guess that's just the side effects
of staying in my house for as long as I have.
You go crazy after a little while
from the way you're treated and the arguments.
You'll hate the way my parents act.
You'll hate being told how to dress.
You'll hate my brother's visiting pattern,
and you'll hate being treated the same.

Far Away Friend

Jessica Gill, Pool Academy

This is a tale of a friendship forged before I turned one,
Of my dad's best friend's eldest son.

Who captured my imagination
With a red and gold balloon,
Of paddling pools and summer games
Egg hunts but all too soon...

Life got in the way.
Parent's jobs and happiness that sent him far away.

Under the Eastern sky,
Where calls to worship echo every Friday,
Weekend play days move
Into Western week days.

I sent him a letter but he is still to reply,
Maybe it is his way of saying goodbye?

For he is fifteen and I am nearly twelve,
He has left his childhood games on the shelf.

Untitled

Zakkai Goriely, The Cherwell School

I stumble blindly through the crowd.

I need to get home.

But where is home?

Someone once told me that 'home is where the heart is'.

But that makes no sense. My heart is in my chest, in-between my lungs, protected by my ribs.

How can that be my home?

I look around me and see hundreds of people walking. Living.

They all probably have homes. I can imagine it.

Like that blonde woman, over there, dragging her children behind her. I can see her reading them to sleep.

And that tall man with the red hair. I can see him slumping on the couch in his flat, his boyfriend changing the channel.

And that elderly couple, sitting in front of the fire, hand in hand.

I am happy for them, I truly am. But I cannot control the great vine inside me.

The envy crawls up me, enveloping me in its leaves. I can see it wrap around my legs, stomach, neck. It winds itself around me, time and time again.

I cannot stop it.

I run, sprint out of the crowd to an empty corner, which I know is waiting for me.

I sit, and shudder under the weight of all those vines.

And all of those vines turn to warm, heavy tears.

They pour down my face, and keep on going.

They go on and on and on.

And with them comes the pain.

I re-live my life, tear after tear.

I will soon become Alice, an ocean creating itself at my wake.

Will it never stop?

Will I ever get home?

“Shoes off at the Door”

Roseanne Harrison, Cheney School

“Shoes off at the door”

Toes gripped the heel of my shoe until they free my feet of security. Flicked off, landing safely among the pile of shoes that lay comfortably by the door. Shoelaces scramble together clinging to their pairs for fear of being separated.

“Shoes off at the door”

Mud cakes the junior football boots, as they rest after glorified goals they once scored. Little boots fill the pile with the crisp fresh aroma of the new freshly washed souls – with a hint of tomato scent from ‘the lunchtime accident’ Velcro straps clinging to not only each other but the larger more experienced shoes in the pile.

“Shoes off at the door”

Boots droop flaccid like Spring flowers in the wind. A distinctive scent of softened well loved leather added to the pile. Crinkled and worn, leaving lines and creases like the roads they have cured. Laying across from the pile a protective blanket for the soles underneath. Pink dishevelled and tired slipper replace boots for the comforting feel of an old pair.

“Shoes off at the...”

“I know mum.”

Home to a dog

Charlie Kelly, Dixons Allerton Academy

Dear Gregory Terrier,

I got the letter about your kennel, in France and I cannot wait to visit. I feel as if I should tell you about mine too, it's not as extravagant as yours and it doesn't have a private forest but it'll do. Any way where was I, oh yes, my home...

It's in the centre of London so it's full with cars to chase and silver birds to terrify. The loud noises make me howl at night but it's good to get a little vocal exercise so I don't mind. My servants, however, find it quit irritating as they lock me in the cold when I do. In your letter, you didn't say anything about servants so I assume that you don't know about them, I'm happy to tell you...

The servants are large creatures that walk like birds. They have two paws and have useless wings that don't flap. They use them to pick things up, yes, I know, why they don't use their mouths. I wondered that when I first moved here but I've got used to it. They also have no fur, they only have patches on the top of their heads which, when the males get older, disappears. Funny really, I bet you're thinking, 'why aren't they cold?'. Well here comes the weirdest part, **THEY STEAL THE FURRY CLOUDS FUR!** It's so bizarre at first I thought they were going to steal mine too, luckily they didn't. I'm still as fluffy as always. These creatures seem distracted, most of the time, by black boxes. I have to say they distract me too, the noises they make. Moos, barks, howls and bangs. Why they spend so much time on them, I do not know. They also love talking to them in a strange language, when it cries. I know weird right? I hate the boxes when they talk to them so I chewed it up. The servant was not impressed. Why they were angry is as much a mystery as the reason they are bold.

The house is dark maroon and seems to look like a large double-story box with holes. We call the holes, windows, and they are very strange. They look like nothing but if you touch them you cannot reach the other side. It's like some servant-invented force field. I have always been bewildered by them. You constantly see things running in them and they annoy me so much, I scream at them, "Get away from me you freaks!" They continue on obliviously to what I have shouted, I'm starting to think they are death or the 'windows' are **SOUNDPROOF!** My mind cannot rest with these 'things' darting across them.

There is a room upstairs that I am most terrified of. It reeks of muck and there is a contraption that wets you. A white table with a pit inside is suspected of causing the disgusting smell, despite this it supplies me with a drink that has the most extraordinary flavour. You must try it.

Well any way I seem to have run out of time so I'll see you next time. Hopefully I would have moved to yours by then.

From your Best pup,

Dog

In my House that day.

Mariela Krasteva, Woodside High School

I sat on my couch wrapped in a sleeping bag and a blanket, wheezing from a cold I caught a couple of days ago when I went to the ice skating rink. Who knew that not taking a warm jumper and a new pair of socks could put you down with such an illness? Going outside was out of the question, I'd get dizzy just trying to stand up. Just then my weird little sister stepped into the warm room, taking in my pale face and hollow eyes.

"Can you get me a glass of water?" I asked, trying not to strain my voice.

She did her trademark, uncomfortable stare and headed back out for the kitchen which is the next room. I sat, watching the TV. What happened next, I cannot explain to this day.

First, I heard what sounded like a box of dishes being put into a washing machine which then started a cycle of crashing. Next, the sound of fireworks came from just beyond the kitchen door. Like someone was setting off a bonfire night display from our kitchen. Then there was silence, for a moment, me sat anticipating what would come next through the wall.

Suddenly, the barking of manic dogs. Lots of dogs, and I felt my face twisting in confusion. We don't have dogs. Then the piercing sound of a truck's horn, followed by a muffled but loud radio broadcast for the weather.

Pistols and shotgun sounds followed. A bear. A blender. A galloping horse? Then silence once again. I sat, mesmerised, playing out the movie in my mind. Then, a single bottle of ketchup rolled into the living room.

"What the heck are you doing in there?!" I shouted in a raspy voice. No response. So I forced myself up out of my chair and stumbled and struggled into the kitchen and couldn't believe what I saw.

All the drawers and pantries were either scattered on the floor. My grandmother's precious plants were re potted in one another's pots. The walls look like they'd been chewed by a dinosaur. The tap was broken to let a sprinkler of water droplets cover the chair that was in the sink and... how do you set a fridge on fire?

And, in the middle of all that, my sister. She shrugs and hands me the glass of water.

"The kitchen. Our kitchen! What.... why?"

I took the glass and heard my lips whisper, "thank you", as I stood, looking around the land of apocalyptic disaster. A dish rolled off the tipped shelf and crashed on the floor next to the split table. My head hurt with too many questions.

It took me a second to realise that my little sister was leaning close to my ear.

"Should I be afraid?", I asked, "What happened?"

My sister smiled and softly whispered, "I guess you owe me one."

Home

Megan Lange, Babington Community College

The front door is an adventure

The living room is a ballroom

The sofa is a prison

And I am its captive

The TV is a clown

My family is the audience

And the cables are a jigsaw that nobody can solve

The cat is the police

Patrolling the front room

The corridor is a bus stop

The coats are its passengers

And the boxes their chairs

The kitchen is the feeling of a week with no food

The fridge is a magnet

And our stomachs are made of steel

The cooker is the sun

And my family are the planets that orbit around it

And every meal time is a solar eclipse

The washing machine is a tornado

The washing line is the rescue squad

The garden is a new book

And the trampoline my favorite character

The shed is the old house at the end of the street

And the shovels are ghosts

The stairs are a mountain

The bathroom is a cloths dump

The sink a whirlpool and the shower a storm

My brother's room is a dark forest

My sister's room is a construction site

My bedroom is a cave

The bed is my cloud

The windowsill my armchair

The bookshelf is a mystery itching to be explored

The slanted ceiling my canvas

And my posters are my paint

The alarm clock is a storm on a sunny day

And the snooze button the breeze that blows it all away.

A Letter To Home

Hannah Leaver, Graveney School

Dear Mama he wrote
Upon the meagre note
a silent tear fell from his eye
and then another splashed onto the parchment
as he began to cry.
He could hear the bombs falling
As grown men around him started bawling.
He questioned why he was there
and to God uttered a silent prayer
He knew he was going to die
and join the others up in the holy sky.
He thought of home
And poor old mother on her own.
'Keep her safe', he mumbled
as the battered ground rumbled.
He thought of the house he'd grown up in
and he rocked back and forth sobbing into his chin.
Cries of distress hit his ears
His emotions were shown through his tears.
Men fell by the second
As death began to beckon.
He thought of his home back in Kent
So many happy memories he had spent
'I love you Ma
I'm happy because I am joining Pa'
Then the bullets came
shrapnel rain.
Then the grenades
Fear displayed

Machine guns

All hollering from the Huns

'Why' he yelled to the sky

To God he implied

To God he cried

To God he sighed

To God he died

As the menacing bullet hit him in the chest

It was then he knew he was at rest

Then the light

Blinding and bright

As he soared to the Promised Land

God himself holding his hand

'Take me home' he mumbled

As the battered ground beneath him crumbled.

When I came from Nepal

Mukahang Limbu, Oxford Spires Academy

As I clutched my suitcase ...

thick hot sweat
built in the slits
of my palms, which
shook holding its cool
metal brace. We walked
into day-winds, thick
as dried out paint
on unwashed canvas.

The sky was painted
daffodil yellow. The ground
was a dirty grey.

There was a metal bird:
an array of fearful,
forgotten
paint.

**

Missing the feeling of home

I smell the iron rust
of the Municipal Gardens.
The sour tang of home still
sits on the tip of my tongue
like the zest of sweet citrus
fizzing.

**

I did not know

of grey, gravel roads,
or the bright buzzing,

of scarlet cars.

I did not know

of lonely red-bricked houses,

gazing strangers,

standing next to next,

military officers, in endless rows.

I did not know,

of silence in the streets,

or the secret whispers on the buses,

or the sly gestures of restaurants.

I know now

In this place,

where I did not know,

the things I did not know

embrace me in ways

I didn't know.

My many-roomed house

Yen-Yen Loke, Wymondham High Academy

In my house there are

101 rooms

98 kitchens

10 bathrooms

12 cats

and 123 servants

to be precise.

The first room is a snazzy room

with sprinkles and popping rocks,

the next room has a beauty room,

I feel it in my socks,

then there is the room-to-loom

where mum weaves golden locks,

and after that is the

ebony room

and the doom room

and the black-and-white-and-red room...!

Number-one-cat is Charlie

a ginger with white spots

second best is Carly

who likes to lick her pinkish dots,

their babies are

Charles the Cuddly Fluffball

Chloe who loves the shopping mall

Caitlin the Guarder of the Hall

Catherine the Very Small

Carl the Mightily Tall

Camomile who owns a tea-stall

Carol who lazes on the wall
Connie the Caterwaul
and Charlie Cat Jr. who is twins with
Carly Cat Jr.

Who would believe that
our house started the size of a pea
who was sent to bed without any tea
(for being a rotten pea)
and landed on a giant's knee
where it gave a shrill plea
"Please save me!"
which was heard by the giant who offered him a tree
and the pea couldn't flee
so hopped on the tree
but the tree ate the pea
(which was a magic pea)
and it grew and grew and grew
(the tree, not the pea)
until it was so bloated it could barely move.

At the back is Diamond Garden
which eats swirly roses and joyful posies;
and playful peonies and dandy dragonflies;
and all things pink and pretty,
then turns them into diamonds.

Little boys climb trees in Diamond Garden,
toddlers scoot on the grass and tumble in the leaves,
stars twinkle in Diamond Garden
where Queen Dia is just and her hair is unmistakably fair
where the poor receive their rightful share

which is very very rare.

When I am starved I wander to Empty Room
which gobbles up the rumbles in my tummy,
when productivity consumes me I escape
to Make Room and cook something yummy;
when age worries me I retreat to
Spare Room and study a mummy.
It's wonderful living in a big house
But it does have its problems –

aaaargh – aaaargh –
aaaaaaaargh -

That's my mother.

“Where's the popcorn?” she cries,
her bonkers hair smells like fries.

“I've lost the popcorn!” she wails,
her whirly dress looks like snails.

Into the pop room
and out the corn room
she darts between hallway and chamber,
upsetting servant and tea trolley,
toppling precariously on too-high-heels.
“She's barking mad,” my father shouts
(in Pet Room the dogs *woof woof* in response).
“Have a look in Sky Kitchen,” I sigh,
“because that's where vegetables like to fly.”

That's the problem with a too-big house

(plus cleaning)

but never mind that for now.

I have a dog. He's called Johnny.

His fizzy hair is marvellous,

it's the colour of tiny sesame seeds floating in
my grandmother's best rice porridge.

I ride on his back

as big and strong as a bear's

when I'm sad or bad or mad or scared.

I think Johnny should be a home. He's powerful yet affectionate.

Unfortunately he's not allowed indoors

because our house is a museum exhibition

and nothing is allowed if it walks on all fours

(cats can fly).

And it's true I like inviting my friends round

although we never manage the whole house

we just get stuck in the snazzy room

(we're just too cool, my friends and I).

What I've always wanted to know is why

we say Can you come to my house

not Can you come to my home.

I'm in the dark.

Maybe it's because a house that's just a

house isn't a home.

P.S. The popcorn was in the fridge.

Home

Yanja Longwe, Nottingham Academy.

What's happening? I don't know what the world has come to any more... It's utter madness. 15, 16 year olds, even younger, risking their lives. All for what ey? 15 months ago I was at my real home, with my beautiful wife and Ben and Holly. Walking in from a musky, wet Sunday afternoon at work, to a pleasant loving warm home. Unfortunately, I've got a new home now. Home front.

I guess I've got used to the smell of decaying bodies, but the sight of it still makes my skin crawl. I carry my bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and living room all in one bag, on my back. Every. Single. Day. I remember when Holly would make me a cuppa and leave it next to my chair. 'Daddy's chair' she called it. As I would collapse into it, my whole body would be swallowed inside. I haven't got my special chair any more, I've got to sit on the squelching, grey mud. The sky doesn't look different to it either. Dark, dismal and depressing. The best thing about coming home would be having the crackling fire warm my crusty toes. However, the only fire you get out here is the bomb flames. The lads think it's fourth of July every day out here.

My proper home smelt of buttery toast with cinnamon. My favourite! I miss having a real bed too. Out here it's just a blanket and a mat - although, you would be lucky to even get that. Though it was different back home. I would watch my beautiful wife's eyes gently shut and she would escape to her fantasy land. Our duvet was neon orange (my mistake for letting her pick) but I would always feel safe in it somehow. The musky smell of fog gets you thinking out here. Why can't I be home? I miss my family terribly but I will sure be snug and safe when I return. My lovely but battered out radio, left at home. The only radio I've got now is to do with lines and dashes. The lively dancing in the front room, now running towards the front line.

What I would do to be home right now...

I shall serve my country with great honour. However, I miss home. I love home. I want to go Home.

Our Home is Our Planet

Alex Lutman, Acland Burghley

Our home is our planet.

Our planet our home.

Unique. Every planet we reach is dead.

Apart from our origin, our place, our home.

There's more to it than a green –blue dot.

Because every planet we reach is dead.

We are the only life for miles around, no, light years around.

And as far as we can tell,

Every planet we reach is dead.

We hope to look out there, looking, searching, with all of our satellites becoming one

We cannot find a replacement.

Because every planet we reach is dead.

We have not got any further than the moon, and there's a reason.

Not because of the speed or the velocity, because every planet we reach is dead.

There must be a reason for all of this emptiness.

No life at all but us.

Every planet we reach is dead.

The spacemen came back. Still no sign.

Plummeting down before reaching terminal velocity.

We can't seem to get it out of our heads, because every planet we reach is dead.

Home

Joshua Moules, Uxbridge High School

I gently push the door to my old home, as it is halfway from falling off its hinges. It doesn't really matter as about a quarter of the door has rotted away. One step into the room is enough to tell me that the water is up to my ankles; a continuous drip echoing across this 'chamber'. As I gaze around a thought comes into my head, *how did I ever call this home?* My feet getting damper with every step, my eyes focus on the objects and places that I once treasured.

Where the sofa was once placed, the only thing that remains now are a few scraps of leather and rotten chunks of wood. the leather on the sofa was once a bright red, now a rough, pale shade of brown. And the wood is now infested with woodlice and maggots. A place that I would go when I needed to sit down, now I don't even want to stand upon that space.

The walls, once covered in brightly coloured paint. Now, peeled, dark and sprawled with graffiti. The walls were once coated in a coat of light blue paint, making myself feel safe inside this square. With bricks crumbling, it is losing privacy second by second. now I almost want to run for the hills when I see the state of these slabs of rotten plaster.

One look straight up reveals the ceiling, once proud of it to be hanging over my head. Only to be presently cracked in a gaping hole, revealing a cracked water pipe, that once provided warmth throughout this house. I step on broken glass, to trace it to the shattered windows. They once gave me a terrific view of the urban city below. Crows and ravens now block the view from what was a perfect crib.

I drop my head which reveals to me cracked and weak floorboards, giving me the image of black abyss below. the only thing I can see in the blackness are falling pieces of wood grain and rusted old pipes. before this present time there was glistening floorboards that looked like they were the sun itself.

The garden is like a jungle, overgrown with nettles and ivy. Sprawling with worms, slugs, snails and cockroaches. Ten years ago this garden was like a patch of sunlight, shining in a bright tone of green. It was a place that all the insects seemed to avoid it. However now, they fill the space like they have nowhere else to live. I step back into the building to head into the kitchen.

The kitchen, once a place that I would love to cook and eat meals from. Now it's a place that makes me want to order a takeaway. the appliances were once blinding master pieces covered in light. Now, they're just rusted, dirty cogwheels covered in stains and dust.

The bedroom just makes me want to sleep outside. I remembered how my bed always made me feel safe when I went to sleep. Now I feel all the demons that I slept away those many nights before can easily get in, with the mattress old and torn. the posts holding the bed up used to be strong. Now, they look like they can't even support a kilogram.

I go for the door and look back at this wasteland one last time. the memories of this place, old and new, I shall keep for a long time. as I begin to shut the door, a thought comes into my head. When I fully shut the door it speaks. *thanks for letting me call you home.*

The Home

Olivia Richardson, City Academy Norwich

He rummaged through the bins,
Looking for his next meal,
To discover an unused scratch card.
He shoved it in his pocket,
Not thinking of the luck,
That could be upon him.
He sat on the street,
Drenched and cold,
Hoping for someone to be kind.
He stared at people,
As they passed by,
No-one gave him money, as no-one cared
Someone dropped a penny or two,
He lunged himself towards it,
Clenching it in his hand.
Day turned into night,
He used the penny once found,
And scratched away,
Hoping to find a future.

Home

Jonathon Rugg, Dame Alice Owen's School

Home. What is it? I used to think it was simply where you live. But a house and a home are two completely different things. The term 'moving house' is misleading. You are moving, not the house. But my home is almost always moving. She rolls in the swell, heeling over to the wind. You can smell the varnished decks mingled with the smell of freedom, the smell of the sea. The breeze rushes through the rigging, filling the topsails with a surge of power. She is alive. Running swiftly through the English Channel, four days out from port, she is making good progress. A change from the dull, mundane sea, Cherbourg is just visible to our left, grey in the fog. The port is filled with many craft, from local fishing trawlers, to lateen merchants and a large barque. A small schooner, laden down with vegetables, passes to port. Small figures on the shore mill about, cleaning and refitting the many docks.

Soon the port has passed astern, and again there is just the bleak sea and the Normandy coast to look at. It carries on like this for a few miles before coming to an abrupt end. From there the land just falls away far to starboard. The weather has cleared up since a few hours before, and we can see the distant mudflats of the bay of le Mont- saint Michel. A faint bump on the horizon is its namesake, a mediaeval fortress, an abbey and village protected by strong, thick walls. It is built on a hill, which becomes an island at high tide. Its walls have never been breached. For some people, that is their home. It seems distant, as if of another world.

The day grows darker, drawing closer to evening. The crew begins to organize the decks in preparation for supper. It is just like a normal home in most ways. The galley smells inviting, the mottled smell of dried meats fried in barley with the special luxury of fresh butter. The mess room is noisy and full of boisterous character, eating and drinking. It is almost as if we are one big family. You get to know people very intimately as shipmates. This is what makes it home. It is the people. If you are in a house with strangers, it does not feel like home. Home is when you are part of it. And when it is part of you. The mess slowly clears and we make our way to our bunks. I, however, climb through the hatch onto the deck and begin my long watch. The loud clanging of a bell, deep inside the belly of the ship, signals the beginning of the night.

This is where I belong. My parents died when I was young. Home for me is not on land. I have spent all my days on this triple- masted merchant vessel. I probably know her better than anyone else on this ship, save the captain. I can sense her movements as she speeds through the waves. The captain has her on the very edge; she is performing the best she can. He knows too, what her limits are and her subtle characters. You see, a ship is like one's self, as it has a certain personality that takes years of living with to be able to finally fathom their secrets.

The far off lights of Brest come into view, a jewel glistening in the darkness. The coast of Brittany is not friendly, not even during the day. The surf batters the sheer rock face, foaming and roaring with power. Many rocks lie out in the open. A death wish to passing ships during the night, the treacherous waters around Le Cap Frehel

have no mercy. The lighthouse on the Cap shines out a signal. Another home. It is far away enough that I can report that we are clear, and the danger has passed. Our home is dangerous. That is why it is essential to have faith in the captain. He is like a father to us. We enjoy the danger; it keeps us alert and interested. No other home is so exposed to the elements as life on a ship. It is all part of our lives at sea. The grey coast, just discernible against the night sky, suddenly disappears. The captain notices and I can feel the bow of the ship come around. I cling on tightly to the rigging as the wind catches the sails on the opposite side and the ship heels over away from the wind. We are on the last stretch of our journey.

The sun slowly rises over the horizon, filling the sky with a warm, invigorating glow. Another bell signals a new day. The ship awakes and here is lots of noise below. A group of sailors in their bedclothes tramp out on deck, inspecting the rigging thoroughly, as if it were a historic wonder. They move around, inspecting everything like this, making sure nothing was lost at night. It is like a spring-cleaning. It is our home.

Home

Misbah Shaheen, Feversham College

I come from place where my mum`s whispering is my alarm and my sister`s snoring is a clock. I come from a place of spicy pepper with a pinch of mild salt. I come from a place where a jigsaw piece is missing.

If only I saw his face before they buried him deep underground.

My home is a place of happiness with a pinch of sadness. I come from a place where the aggressive football tries to escape my feet. I come from a place where video games are my best friends. I come from a place of happiness with a pinch of pain. I come from a place where homework books are my pillow. I come from a place where the door is open and inside are loving people a welcome, safe environment.

But there is still a hole in my heart that cannot be refilled.

I come from a place where memories echo from the hallway. I come from a place where a cat weaves between my legs hungry for food. Suddenly I think about the people who want a home and food who live on dust and dirt. I look around the cosy warm house. I should be grateful that I`m safe and that I have got a home.

I remind myself there is no elevator to success - you have to take the stairs.

Home Consumers

Isaac Silver, Wymondham High Academy.

Clack-clack-clack. “What are you up to?” Pause.

“Nothing much, you?” Clack-clack. Clack-clack-clack.

“Yeah, me neither. Want to come round?” Pause. Refresh. Nothing. Refresh again.

‘Seen at 19:27.’ I lean back in my leather-effect deluxe office chair. Oh well, it was worth a shot. I suppose my powers of seduction won’t be used tonight after all. I close the browser window on my high-resolution screen and shut down my custom-built, quad core, high-speed PC. My room is cold. I didn’t notice before; I was too engrossed in my conversation with my future wife. Ha. Like that’s ever going to happen. It really is cold now. I’m faced with a predicament. Do I put a hoodie over my designer, handmade onesie or do I go downstairs and put the thermostat up? I’m stumped. It truly is a dilemma. Maybe I’ll freeze to death before I decide which option is more beneficial. On the one hand, the thermostat is literally tens of metres away. On the other, Hoodies are bulky and my favourite one is in the wash anyway so that leaves the thermostat as the only solution. I pad across my sheepskin rug, my pins and needles stricken feet slapping against the floor like dying fish against the deck of a boat. I saw that once on *Deadliest Catch*. I wonder if fish feel like my feet right now.

Cranking the thermostat up about ten degrees and checking the nearest radiator to make sure, I’m satisfied that my fingers won’t fall off due to frostbite in the near future. I reach my room, jump onto my Henry VIII sized modern-art décor bed, and flick on the 36 inch TV in the corner. BBC News – war in Syria. Switch channels. ITV – yet another reality celeb show. Switch channels. Channel 4 – adverts. Switch...wait. Charity ad. Starving and homeless kids in Africa as always. I think about what it would be like to not have a home. Say, it burned down or something. What would I save? Well, the obvious answer is the most valuable thing. Who wouldn’t? I don’t have much emotional attachment to my house. Can I call it my home? It’s where I live of course, but would I even care if I had to live somewhere else? Probably not. I could do with another fifteen square metres of space in my bedroom. Yet here these kids are; on the street with nothing but some clothes and family photos. What does home mean to them? Maybe it’s not a physical thing. Maybe their home is a photo of their parents or a memory of their past. Why is it that I need all of these material goods to make myself feel at home? The epiphany strikes me harder than any school bully ever could: We work boring jobs and trade away our lives and aspirations to buy useless things that we need. I’m a changed human being. The wool has been lifted from my eyes and I suddenly feel like I have a purpose.

At that moment, the advert changes. “You absolutely can’t have a home without this six-speed massaging recliner. With built-in comfort technology, you will never want to leave your house again? Simply call this number and you can get 10% off your purchase!” I need this. The guy said so himself. No home should have to be without one of these technological marvels. With all thoughts of my philosophical awakening gone, I reach for my phone and begin to dial.

Author’s note: I hope you enjoyed reading this satirical piece as much as I enjoyed writing it. It is intended to be both funny and a stark image of the consumer society. The character in the story isn’t based on a single person, but rather as traits of all of us. With that in mind, I hope this piece makes people realise that one doesn’t need every new gadget to make a building their home. Their home is whatever is valuable to them.

Nigeria

Elizabeth Taiwo, Lammas School

The house was the only place we could hide
From the dangers that await us outside.
We watch TV like we have nothing to worry about,
We ate popcorn like we were being watched
By people we don't want or people we don't like,
Our lives were ruined, burned down
Like my Auntie's house, that I once loved.

We covered ourselves with cloth to hide our shame
When something happened we were always blamed.
The tears from our eyes burned us like the fire of anger.
We wanted to do something but we couldn't,
There was nothing to say, nothing to do.

We were from heartbreaks.
It was like our life was in other people's hands.
When we were little we thought life would be great.
Now look at us, hiding from people we don't know.
We listened to what people said
We had our own life to live
But we didn't know then that every day of our life was miserable

My grandma would always tell me
Everything will be ok, but it wasn't.

Nigeria was a place not to be at this time
Muslim and Christians fight to communicate
Churches being burned
Mosques being burned.

People dying for something they know nothing about

Parents and children were frightened

Parents worry about their unborn children

What kind of world will they live in?

What Does Home Mean To Me?

Morgan Toft, Boulevard Academy

As soon as you step through the door, streaks of orange and black dart towards you. Before you know it, you're engulfed in a flurry of fur, barks and tails. You strain to see what they are; they're almost unperceivable. Slowly, your eyes adjust to the bouncing, boisterous and baffling bundle of hair and find that two dogs, one a gargantuan, black giant, the other as small as a rat, are leaping up at you. The unmistakable, wet-dog scent hits your nose.

Finally, you are able to untangle yourself from the crowd and rush into the front room. The dogs follow you, and run and crash about. There, you notice an immense cage. Inside it is a plump rat, with black patches all over the silky fur. The eyes are beady yet seem to be full of emotion, and the tail is a salmon pink and looks almost scaly.

Just as you decide to sit down on the creamy, soft sofa, a young boy rushes up to you, clutching a wizened tan, black and white Guinea Pig. Incredulously, you wonder how that thing is still alive. You can only just hear the quiet squeaks and snuffles the small animal makes.

You walk slowly up the stairs as you want to get away from all of the noise and fur. As you plod along, ginger and black cats dash around and purr. You sigh in exasperation and reach down to tickle the cats' ears. One cat has silky, soft fur, and she winds round your legs like a snake. The other, however, has matted, messy, coppery fur and jumps up at you. She'll probably bite your toes in a minute, looking for attention.

The only place left to hide seems to be the garden. Shoulders hunched, you slyly try and creep away into the kitchen, only to be told by someone that you're going to be getting an axolotl and a couple of fish. More pets. Oh well.

Finally, you reach outside. Peace at last. Until... a golden, big eared rabbit jumps next to you then away again. At least he is your own. You try and pick him up; he doesn't like that. He wriggles out of your grasp and hops back into the hutch (the old playhouse was converted to his home). So you follow him, like Alice entering Wonderland. You become more aware of the aroma of hay, which smells remarkably like a stable. The dark night seems to teem with wildlife. Slowly, as you shut the rabbit away safely, you realise that there's no place you'd rather be than the chaotic, crazy, crowded place you call home.

My Home

Ciaran Wilson, Ulidia Integrated College.

My 'home' is somewhere where I feel I've cut everything out. I'm only thinking of one thing, and that is how I'm concentrating and how I play the game.

My home is 1 acre of space and is very green, with white lines marking certain places.

Every time I'm at my home, I get this weird feeling like butterflies in my stomach, but then once I've settled at my home for a while, the nerves go away and nothing can distract me from what I'm doing.

I have one big family at my home: we work together through everything; we can have our ups and downs, but whatever happens, we always fight until the end.

We come together, my whole family, twice a week: once during the week and once every Saturday morning.

At my home, we focus on an oval ball. It can be used in so many ways. I can kick it as high as the sky or as low as the ground; it can be carried in my hands or I can throw it like a bullet that has been shot out of a gun.

My family have different roles to play: I have the 'forwards' as one part of the family and the 'backs' at the other.

The forwards' jobs are to help the backs keep the ball; maul, like bulls on a rampage, into any other teams that come to our home to win the oval ball. Then there are the backs: the backs are the people who normally score the points; they run hard and hit other players' hard while in defence, but when running for the white line at the other side of the pitch, they run as fast as rockets taking off to space.

It's such a different feeling from any normal home. I've got to be sharp and keep an eye on the play on the pitch. I'm so concentrated that no one can distract me.

My 'home' is on a rugby pitch and it's better than any other home I can think of.

HOME IS...

Lilian Yeboah-Darteh

The forbidden cat that lives below our flat.
The lamppost light which just won't go off.
The sound of your mum praying and the praises of songs.
The beating sound of drums and trumpets call...
What is home?

A restricted place of religion and etiquette.
The stern voices that quarrel secretly.
The salty tears that fall with grief and plea.

Religion is a cage that shrinks in time.
Age is a number that grows in a lifetime.

Home is...

The forbidden cat that lives below our flat.
The lamppost light which just won't go off.
The sound of your mum praying and the praises of songs.
The beating sound of drums and trumpets call...
What is home?