



From the Headmaster

Poetry is the power of defining the indefinable in terms of the unforgettable, so said the charismatic, bespectacled American poet Louis Untermeyer. During periods of challenge throughout history, poetry has often proved to be the medium capable of expressing complex emotions in a way which instantly captures the zeitgeist of the time. Indeed, many of the world's most iconic pieces of art have been inspired by writers, authors, painters, musicians whose lives have been dominated by extreme emotion or upheaval. The current times have been no exception and Coronavirus has already been the seed which has stimulated the growth of a number of creative projects. Not surprisingly, our students have been similarly inspired and I hope you take the time to read the fantastic anthology of poems which Ms Clarkson's students have put together giving reflections on recent months with no little maturity, sophistication and insight. A link is provided in a letter which accompanies today's *The Bulletin*.

Nationally, there has also been an outbreak of creativity: a poem by London-based film producer Tom Roberts has gone viral in recent weeks, a poem which is full of optimism for the future. Recent years have seen businesses, politicians and educators speaking passionately about the importance of learning how to be kinder, how to be fairer, how to be more sustainable, how to be more progressive. Although worthy in themselves, there was a sense in which these goals were abstract, somehow detached from the real world. The current crisis has proved that rather than just aspirational niceties, however, these aspects have had to become the new norm. Tom's poem *The Great Revelation* imagines a time after the current crisis is over, in a not-so-distant future, as he reads a bedtime story to a child. In the first part of the poem, he explains how the world was *going around in circle* and was a place of *waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty*, trapped in over consumption, pollution and an eco-system on the verge of collapse.

*We'd always had our wants, but now it got so quick.
You could have everything you dreamed of in a day and with a click.
We noticed families had stopped talking. That's not to say they never spoke.
But the meaning must have melted and the work-life balance broke.
And the children's eyes got squarer and every toddler had a phone.
They filtered out the imperfections but amidst the noise, they felt alone.
And every day the sky grew thicker, 'til we couldn't see the stars.*

*So, we flew in planes to find them while down below we filled our cars.
We'd drive around all day in circles. We'd forgotten how to run.
We swapped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks till there were none.
We filled the sea with plastic 'cause our waste was never capped.
Until each day when you went fishing, you'd pull them out already wrapped.
And while we drank and smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why,
It's best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.*

The second half of the poem, in stark contrast, is a message of great hope and positivity:

*But while we were all hidden, amidst the fear and all the while,
The people dusted off their instincts, they remembered how to smile.
They started clapping to say thank you, and calling up their mums.
And while the cars keys were gathering dust, they would look forward to their runs.
And with the sky less full of planes, the earth began to breathe.
And the beaches brought new wildlife that scattered off into the seas.
Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking.
We'd grown so used to bad news but some good news was in the making.
And so when we found the cure and were allowed to go outside,
We all preferred the world we found to the one we'd left behind.
Old habits became extinct, and they made way for the new.
And every simple act of kindness was now given its due.*

As a school we continue to plan strategically for the uncertainties of the months ahead. The sentiment of this message of hope is one which is at the heart of our discussions: every decision made has the best interests of the students at the core and we are determined to emerge better and stronger from this crisis. We want to hold on to all those positive things which have become the norm in the light of Coronavirus and as we think of our school values and what are the most important things in life, we want to make sure that we return through the physical doors of the RGS an even stronger, kinder, more sustainable community.

As Louis Untermeyer noted *Poetry is the power of defining the indefinable in terms of the unforgettable* and this, I feel, certainly holds true, as does one of his other famous quotations, *Life, alas, is very drear. Up with the glass! Down with the beer!*

I wish you all a restful and relaxing weekend #RGSTogether.