

CHRIS EVANS
ANGELICA BELL MICHAEL UNDERWOOD

500 WORDS: BLACK LIVES MATTER

All profits
from the sale of
this book go to the
Coram Beanstalk
charity

500

WORDS:

**BLACK LIVES
MATTER**

A STUDIO PRESS BOOK

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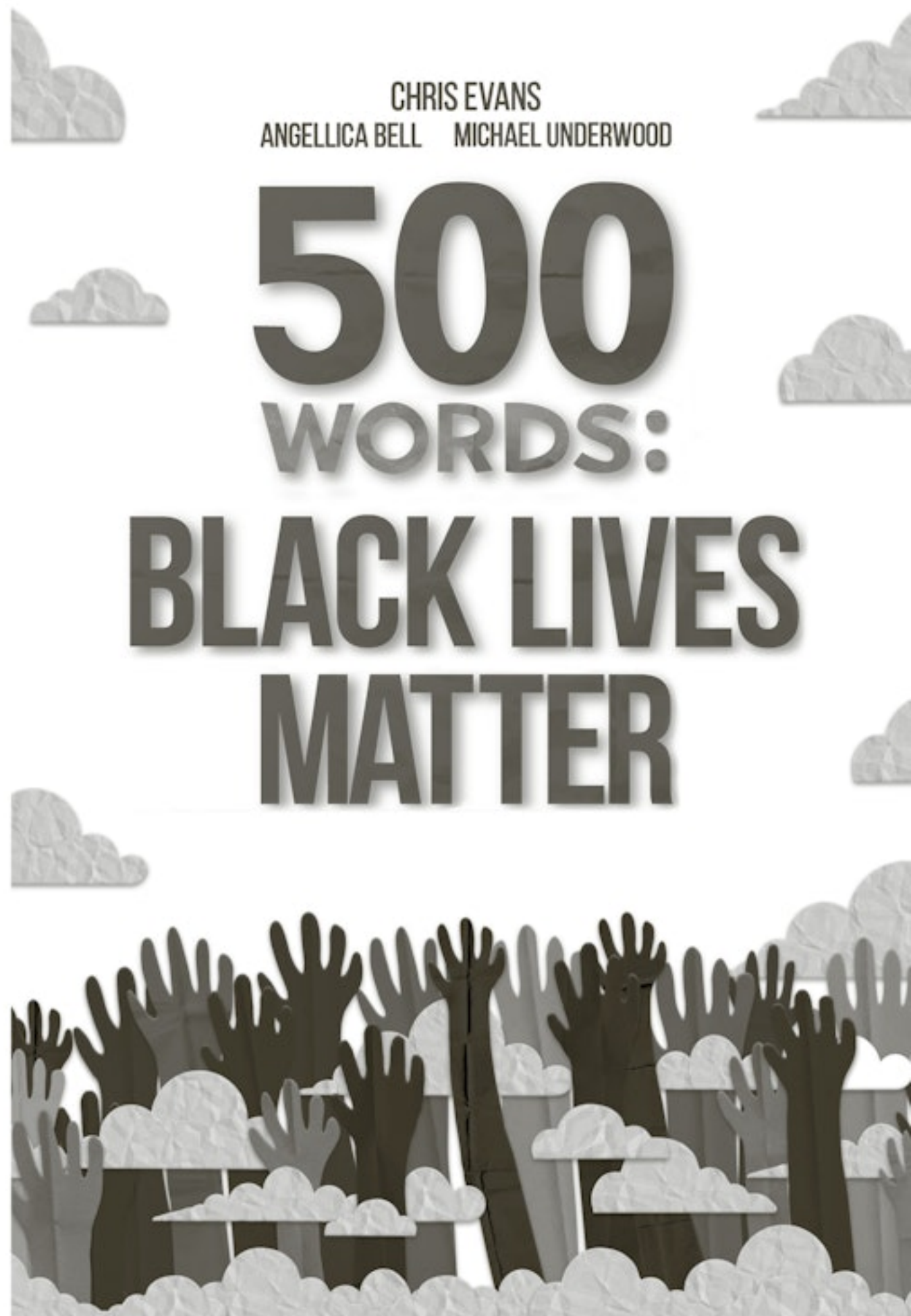
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ANGELICA BELL MICHAEL UNDERWOOD

500 WORDS: BLACK LIVES MATTER



500 Words



Black lives Matter



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INTRODUCTION

“Dear Reader,

This book is a collection of some of the best entries that we had in this edition of the competition. Reading back through these stories, we are blown away by the passion, creativity and poignancy of the writing. The topic of Black Lives Matter was chosen to enable conversations, learning and provide an outlet for children to use their voices creatively to explore these crucial global issues, and this is something we have definitely seen.

We are excited to be working alongside the children's literacy support charity Coram Beanstalk, with all the profits from the sale of this book being donated to them in order to further their mission – building readers for life.

500 Words: Black Lives Matter was an absolute whirlwind from start to finish and we cannot thank the writers, the judges, and everyone in between enough!

The work does not stop here, so make sure you keep writing and using your voice for change.

See you next year! ”

The 500 Words Team



CHRIS EVANS

“Three words: Black Lives Matter.

500 Words: The biggest children's writing competition on the planet. We know (because some very clever people at the Oxford University Press have told us) that 500 Words is the best indicator of what British kids are thinking about year on year. Trump led the charge back in 2017, then it was plastic and the environment, with Covid featuring this year even though it only came to light in the final couple of weeks of the main competition back in February. Our 500 Words: Black Lives Matter special however, has been a game changer.

First of all, it was conceived, executed and won all within the space of four weeks. Secondly, it is the first 500 Words where we have requested the nation's 5-13 year olds to write around a given theme.

As always, they didn't disappoint. What follows is an amazing and profound collection of some of our favourites.

Be prepared to laugh, sigh and cry.

Good luck and you might want to keep a tissue or two handy.

Thank you for supporting this and future 500 Words events by buying this book. ”



MICHAEL UNDERWOOD

“When Chris first asked me to be involved in this spin-off of the 500 Words competition, I didn't know just how much it would be embraced by young people across the UK. What I did know, was I wanted to give those people a voice and an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about “Black Lives Matter” and the wider issue of systemic racism. The result is this incredible collection of stories, poems, and essays. They are honest, thought-provoking, and emotional. Chairing the judging panel was a real honour, as I got to see for myself the incredible variety and high quality of writing we received which made the judge's decision so difficult. Racism isn't going to stop overnight, but by everyone talking about it openly, and recognising there is a problem, we can move in the right direction. I'd like to thank all the schools who supported this competition and of course all the young people who took part, sharing their personal understanding about this important issue.”



ANGELICA BELL

“2020 will always be a year I remember for many reasons and I think others will feel the same. One thing that struck me was how much I missed and loved people, my friends and even having general contact with strangers, so when it was highlighted that there still is so much division in the world brought to the forefront of the news by the death of George Floyd, it hit me hard. Being part of 500 Words – Black Lives Matter was incredibly important to allow our younger generation an outlet for them to vocalise their thoughts and stories on this global issue of racism using the power of words. We can look to the phrase “out of the mouths of babes” to understand often it's our young people that bring wisdom and clarity in difficult situations, and they didn't disappoint. Thank you to all those who engaged with the project. Thank you to all those who messaged me about it. And thank you to those who love unconditionally. We will get there.”



PRAISE FOR 500 WORDS: BLACK LIVES MATTER

“The empathy and observation within these stories is truly inspiring. These children’s understanding of the world around us and the changes that need to be made, give me real hope for the generation of tomorrow.”

– Nicole Kidman



“The standard and quality of the stories are awe-inspiring. They are poignant, moving and some extremely heartfelt. My congratulations to all the finalists.”

– Jim Broadbent



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“The incredible talent on display in these stories is truly impressive. This genuinely moving and authentic writing is a much needed rallying cry for change.”

– Mark Strong



“I was so moved by the range of skilful, moving stories featured in 500 Words: Black Lives Matter. These are some seriously talented young writers.”

– Colin Jackson



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PRAISE FOR 500 WORDS: BLACK LIVES MATTER

“Poignant, incredibly assured and deeply emotional storytelling. Their brilliant response to why Black Lives Matter, is an exemplary model for empathy, compassion and understanding of the world we live in. I have been blown away by the quality and skill of these young writers.”

– Shobna Gulati



“In a time of such bleak uncertainty, these gifted and sensitive young writers give great hope for the future. I encourage them all to keep writing and using their talent.”

– Rob Brydon



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“Our future feels in good hands with these phenomenal, powerful stories. I found them genuinely moving, thought provoking and they gave me such hope. What a wonderful and inspiring project to be involved in and what incredible future screenwriters, novelists, authors and warriors we have in waiting for the years to come. Such a joyful and important creative endeavour beautifully carried out.”

– Amanda Abbington



“I think the 500 words competition this year focussing on the Black Lives Matter movement is a wonderful way to get young children to learn and understand about the importance of equality. It allows children to be creative and describe their feelings and this is so important for their mental health.”

– Joe Wicks



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THE HEAD JUDGES

There were almost 6,000 stories submitted to 500 Words: Black Lives Matter! A team of public judges, made up of teachers and librarians read and marked all the entries. The top 2,500 stories were professionally read by The Reading Agency who suggested the top sixteen entries to the judging panel.

The judging panel, consisting of Angellica Bell, Michael Underwood and head judges Malorie Blackman, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Francesca Simon and Charlie Higson chose the top eight stories, and from those one winner in each age category.



Malorie Blackman

Former children's laureate and author of over 60 books Malorie Blackman is best known for her YA book series "Noughts & Crosses".

Frank Cottrell-Boyce

Carnegie medal winner Frank Cottrell-Boyce is the author of many critically-acclaimed children's books including *Sputnik's Guide to Life*.

Francesca Simon

Creator of "Horrid Henry", Francesca Simon is the author of over 50 books – one of her stories *The Monstrous Child* was even turned into an opera!

Charlie Higson

Screenwriter, actor and children's author Charlie Higson is best known as the author of the "Young Bond" and "Enemy" book series.



The background of the slide is white and features several stylized, grey, pixelated clouds of various sizes and shapes scattered across the upper and middle portions of the frame. A solid tan-colored horizontal bar is positioned at the very bottom of the slide.

**5-9
YEARS**



PRAISE FOR THE WINNERS

WINNER: I FEEL OUT OF CONTROL!

Sara De Jong

Of the winning story the judges said:

"This is a real gem of a story and is deeply, deeply rooted in reality. The last sentence is one of the best closes I've ever read."

– *Malorie Blackman*

"Easily and by far the most accomplished piece of work in this category, a joy to read."

– *Frank Cottrell-Boyce*

"Well done, your story is sensational! Whilst it read like an essay it created an engaging and amazing story."

– *Francesca Simon*

"Of all the stories we've read, this remained with me for a long time. It's incredibly memorable and is such an important piece of writing."

– *Charlie Higson*

FINALIST: Something You're Not

Katherine Ebrey

What the judges said:

"What a beautiful story. It encourages all of us to embrace who we are rather than something we're not."

– *Malorie Blackman*

"The narrative encourages us to find the space where we belong and enjoy what connects us."

– *Frank Cottrell-Boyce*

"A wonderful story that explores the importance of seeing beyond superficial difference."

– *Francesca Simon*

"What a delightful and thought provoking read."

– *Charlie Higson*



PRAISE FOR THE WINNERS

FINALIST: Grandpa is
Emerson Nwaneri

What the judges said:

"There's a sweet use of language in this and it pays homage to Grandpa beautifully."
– *Malorie Blackman*

"I really enjoyed the alternative take you took, it's imaginative and creative."
– *Frank Cottrell-Boyce*

"This really stayed with me, it's such a lovely personal piece."
– *Francesca Simon*

"The use of language is so simple, yet so effective and you approached it from a different angle."
– *Charlie Higson*

FINALIST: Love Is Colour-blind
Evie Bertin

What the judges said:

"I loved this lighter piece. It's refreshing and fun but carries a message."
– *Malorie Blackman*

"What an ambitious, inventive and bold piece."
– *Frank Cottrell-Boyce*

"The combination of humour with the serious topic is genius."
– *Francesca Simon*

"The last line is very funny, it made us all laugh and I think Boris would too if he heard it."
– *Charlie Higson*

WINNER: I FEEL OUT OF CONTROL!

Sarah De Jong

George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis.

A police officer knelt on his neck until he died. George Floyd was black. The police officer is white. People are marching to demand that it does not happen again. They are marching against police cruelty, and against racism. I feel out of control: I'm so angry and sad. When I feel like this, I like to draw pictures. I find that it helps me to feel better. But today – today was different. I took my bucket of chalk and headed outside to start drawing on the sidewalk. I began writing George Floyd's name in big yellow letters when my neighbour Mohammed walked by.

"I'm angry, too," he said.

He picked up a piece of chalk and started drawing figures of the protesters inside my bubble letters. While Mohammed drew, he shared his own stories of racism. My classmate Ping walked by.

"I can't believe this happened," he said and, grabbing a piece of chalk, started drawing.

Ping explained how the discrimination he and his family face has gotten worse with COVID-19.

"I'm not a virus, you know," he said as he drew a large sunflower onto the sidewalk.

Mohammed and I nodded. "We know."

My neighbour Ana came by. Ana arrived in the UK some twenty years ago from Poland.

"This world has become very scary," she said as she bent down and made a summer sky with sweeps of blue and white chalk.

"Some people broke all the windows at my son's grocery shop because of Brexit and wrote 'Go Home' across the door," she finally whispered.

Mohammed patted her hand. Kwame, my best friend from next door, came over carrying a list of people's names who also faced police unkindness. He took a piece of chalk and began writing their names inside Ping's sunflower. Terrence Crutcher was killed by police, even though he had no gun and was no threat, Kwame explained as he signed his name to the sidewalk.

"Mr Crutcher's death led to protests in Tulsa. Eric Garner died after being placed in a strangling hold by a police officer. He died because he couldn't breathe – just

like George Floyd," Kwame said quietly. "Breonna Taylor was shot by police while standing in her own apartment." Kwame wrote her name. "Freddie Gray died in the back of a police van. He broke his neck!" Kwame carefully added Gray's name.

Together, Mohammed, Ping, Ana, Kwame and I drew at the centre of our drawing a picture of George Floyd. I drew the head, while Ping drew the eyes and nose. Kwame drew the ears and mouth, Ana the hair and Mohammed the upper body. I proudly looked at the drawing we made. I knew that tonight's rain would likely wash away our drawing, and I knew that tomorrow morning I would likely wake up feeling again out of control and needing to draw. But for today, I said softly to myself, "I can breathe now."

RUNNER UP: **Something You're Not** *Katherine Ebrey*

WANTED: BLUE DRUMMER

Ruby read the banner. She felt a ripple of excitement; she knew this was her chance to finally be in a band. She took the banner home to her mum so she could see. Once she got home, she showed her mum. Her mum frowned and looked worried.

"But darling, you can't be in a blue band because you're a Red. You have red hair and they have blue. Don't try and be something you're not."

But Ruby took no notice. She went upstairs, got out her laptop and ordered a bottle of Super Sapphire hair dye. The next day, Ruby set off to the audition bright and early, with her freshly-dyed new blue hair flowing in the wind. On her name tag, instead of Ruby, it read Violet. The auditions were held in a big wood full of bluebells. Ruby felt the sun on her face as she bashed and crashed on the drum kit.

The leader of the band, Sinnika, smiled and cried out, "Way to go, Violet! We have to have you in our band."

Siyan and Indy nodded approval towards Ruby and they said, "You are a natural drummer, Violet!"

Ruby glowed with pride; she was going to be in the famous Blue Bashers band!

But then, all of a sudden, it started to pour with rain! Everyone rushed under the gazebo for shelter, but Ruby was lost in the music.

As she played, the rain trickled over her head onto her face and Sinnika cried out, "LOOK AT HER HAIR!"

Everyone turned to face Ruby. The hair dye was a puddle on the floor and, as they looked up, they saw her hair had got soaked and was as red as a cherry. Ruby stopped and realised what had happened. She froze in horror.

Siyan cried out, "What on earth happened to your –" he stopped – "RED hair?"

Ruby tried to speak, but no words came out. Her eyes welled up with tears and she ran from the woods, leaving a single drumstick behind in a puddle of blue dye. The Blue Bashers looked at each other.

Indy said, "She's got red hair. She's not like us at all." "But she is," said Sinnika. "She drums like we do. She gets lost in the music like us."

They all said in unison, "We've GOT to fix this."

The Blue Bashers picked up the drumstick and Indy fetched a new, clean sheet of paper. On it she wrote:

WE NEED OUR DRUMMER BACK!
WHETHER YOU ARE VIOLET OR NOT,
IF THIS STICK BELONGS TO YOU,
YOU ARE MEANT TO BE ONE OF US.
COME AND GET IT!

Days later, when Ruby read the new banner, her mouth twisted into a smile for the first time since the audition. She ran back to the woods to meet the Blue Bashers. But something had changed. Each and every band member now had a different colour hair.

"Welcome to the Rainbow Rockers," they shouted. "Let's play!"

RUNNER UP:**Grandpa is***Emerson Nwaneri*

Grandpa is a fresh brown bun from the local shop
 A treat of toast and tea in the morning just for we
 Grandpa is helping around the house
 Only the best will do for nan
 Givin' her de favourite tomato soup in a pan
 Grandpa is laughing at the telly telling jokes every night
 Telling us about his stories that made us very bright
 Grandpa is going shopping for us don't matter de price
 Getting ice-cream and chocolate cake
 Always treating us to something great
 Grandpa is Jamaican style food
 Loving de fried dumplin' and hot chicken
 Always wanting us to go there with him
 Grandpa says "mind yh don't fall down the stairs yh nah"
 Grandpa is nice.

RUNNER UP:**Love is Colour-blind***Evie Bertin*

Summer 2020 is over, and it turned out to be a horrible nightmare.

It all started with the prime minister Boris Johnson's shocking announcement on the evening news, "The World is fighting another pandemic, a new virus is spreading across the globe and is about to reach our country."

He tells us that it's nothing like we have ever seen before as the virus attacks our eyesight, so nobody will be able to see colours anymore. All colours have disappeared from our vision, like a sort of colour-blindness, so we can no longer tell each other apart. The Prime Minister has reassured us that our eyesight will come back in a few months when the pandemic is defeated or when a vaccine is invented.

People started to get ready for the virus to attack. Scientists worked around the clock to find a vaccine for this new threat. Communities started labelling the colour of their clothes, crayons, medicines, food, hot and cold

taps, paints and pens so that they wouldn't mix the wrong colours together or put themselves in danger.

Two weeks later, Boris told the nation, "The virus is here so be prepared for what will happen. You can go about your everyday life but we now all look the same, so wear name badges, keep calm and carry on."

Meanwhile, the pandemic has spread around the world. The nations can no longer distinguish colours. For generations some people had been friends with people who only appeared like themselves and this had caused a lot of upset and inequality amongst others. So, with this colour blindness virus, we made new friends and were even enjoying the pandemic as it made us think more freely, and we were all treated as equals because we look the same as each other. Instead of judging people by the colour of their skin, we were seeing people for who they really are, their personality, kindness and if they made us laugh. People were supporting each other and sharing stories about their life and we started to feel much more united during the pandemic. We soon realised that in many ways we are all the same because deep down we are all human beings, and nothing changes just because of our skin colour or culture, but it is our personalities and things we like that makes us special.

Six months later, Boris appeared back on the TV in full colour and said, "The pandemic is over and we have found a vaccine, it will be delivered to your house at midday today, and soon we can all see colours again and everything will appear as it used to do."

When our vision returned to normal, we found we had made all sorts of new friends from different cultures and life was so much better and happier. Unfortunately for Boris, he had forgotten to label his clothes and appeared with blue hair, a pink suit, brown shirt and a doughnut tie.

The End.

White and Black, Cats and Mice

Lula Jankovic

It all started when the new family arrived in the village.

Things that had been simple before, suddenly felt complicated. You see, the cats didn't like it when the mouse family came. Everything had been perfect before. They knew their neighbours. They took care of their kittens. Life was simple.

As soon as the mice stepped foot in the village, everything was wrong. Suspicions were whispered. Rumours started. The mice were dangerous. The mice were crafty. The mice would steal. The mice were vermin. The mice would nibble and chew and destroy everything. House prices would never be the same again.

The mayor, his wife and children made a list of what mice weren't allowed to do. They displayed it at the Village Hall and pinned it on lamp posts. No mice allowed in Cat Shops – Mice cannot drive cars – Mice cannot buy houses – Mice cannot trespass on Cat property – Mice cannot jog in walking areas – Mice can only ride at the back of buses.

But one of the Mayor's children was concerned. Every day, she saw the little mice playing by the lane on her way to school. She didn't think it was fair for the mice. One afternoon on her way home, she bumped into one of the tiny mice.

"Hello," she said.

"Hi...", whispered the mouse shyly, looking at the ground.

"My name's Lettuce," said the kitten.

"I...I... I'm Amaria," answered the little mouse, cradling a minute doll made from twigs.

Lettuce looked at the fragile toy and thought of her huge playroom filled with balls and dolls and scratch towers.

"Why don't you come to school?" asked Lettuce.

"It's not allowed," said Amaria.

"But you're a child just like me. We are different that's all," said Amaria, straightening her cotton dress.

"It's always like this wherever we go."

The two girls walked down the lane together. Instead of going to her piano lesson, Lettuce visited the mouse family in their camper van. The camper van was cosy with bunks and bunting. Fairy lights hung above the table. Amaria's mother had lit candles and prepared a simple dinner.

"Don't you eat cheese?" asked Lettuce, looking at the rice and beans in her bowl. "I thought mice only ate cheese."

"There are lots of things that people think about us that aren't true," said Amaria.

"I've got an idea," said Lettuce. "Do you have any paints?" she asked.

The girls made banners: "Mice deserve an education too!"

The next day, they stood outside the village school before Assembly. Then, when the bell went, Lettuce took Amaria by the hand.

"You're coming with me," she said, and she marched into her classroom and sat down at her desk, pulling up a chair for her tiny friend.

Charlie's Special Formula

Samuel Clifford

Charlie Cloud is just a normal little boy with long curly hair and a great big smile.

He lives with his mum, dad and little brother Jack. His favourite thing to do is play football with his friends and family. He loves to watch TV and his favourite show is Deadly Sixty presented by Steve Backshall. Charlie loves going to school, his favourite subject is science and he loves to experiment. He also loves to see his friends. His best friend is Cristiano Ronaldo Junior!

His friends are all different. They have different hair colour, eye colour and skin colour. Although he had never really noticed that before. His gang is made up of girls and boys who all like different types of sport.

It is the summer of 2020 and the world has gone into lockdown because of the coronavirus. Charlie Cloud is annoyed and sad because he can't play football with his friends and he can't go to school because they are closed because of the deadly virus! Charlie has been at home for

eleven weeks now, he goes to the park nearly every day and his mum and dad are at home more, although they watch the news aaaall the time!

Tonight, he heard something terrible: that a black man named George Floyd had been killed by police.

Charlie thought, "Who does that and why?"

After that there were big crowds called protests, everyone was so angry and wanted the world to change. Charlie Cloud started to think how he could help. He stayed up all night thinking about what he could do. All of a sudden, he realised science was the key, he would make a magic formula to give to grown-ups so they could see the world like children do with all people the same and no such thing as racism. Charlie decided his formula would be made of random things that babies, like only more revolting: mushy baby food, rotten baby milk and rusty rattle toys.

Charlie got straight to work creeping to his lab in the secret basement of his house. He put on his goggles and lab coat and he was ready to go! He put the ingredients in a "miniaturiser", stirred them in the pot and left it overnight to form – it smelt disgusting, Charlie hoped it would work. By the morning it was ready. Charlie decided to send the formula to Boris Johnson and it arrived within a minute.

Suddenly the time had come. Boris drank the formula and he sent it to all the adults.

The reviews are coming in now. Charlie is so nervous... it is a success! Charlie cannot believe it. He has made the world change forever for the better. Charlie Cloud will go down in history for reminding grown-ups how to see the world in a better way.

In The Court

Toluwa Teriba

The court was silent.

The policeman accused of three murders was sat silently in the centre of the room aware people were also watching his trial on TV. He also knew how he wanted this trial to end – with him found not guilty. He was almost arrogantly confident the mostly Caucasian jury would never find him guilty and his legal team also requested a particular judge who they believed could rule in their favour.

"You," boomed judge Jessica, "have murdered three people this year, is that right?"

"I..." stammered the scared policeman.

"Answer!" shouted the judge.

"My lawyer will in my defence explain how it all happened with all 3 people," he answered to the judge coldly.

"Mrs Mendstone," she said, hinting for the lawyer to talk in the policeman's defence. "My client, Mr Hautings committed these acts as a result of him trying to defend

himself and the lives of others. A group of violent protesters attacked the police with clubs and my client had no option but to use his firearm to scare them back. Accidentally all 3 shots fired from his gun hit and killed 3 black protesters."

At this point, the prosecution lawyer jumped up and shouted, "Such a coincidence for you to have singled out and killed 3 black persons from the pack of protesters, sounds more like Mr Hautings specifically targeted and killed them because of their skin colour."

Judge Jessica had had enough of the shouting, turned to the jury, and announced that people who thought the man was innocent should raise their hands. Only thirteen from a fifty-man jury raised their hands.

"But..." started the policeman.

"Order!" interrupted Jessica, banging her gavel on the table. "And those who think he is guilty?" The rest of the jury raised their hands.

The opinion of the jury was a very clear decision. The judge went into a quick recess and came back with a twenty-five years prison sentence. Mr Hautings dropped his head in disappointment, he showed no emotion or offered any apology to the families of the dead people. The court

security placed him in handcuffs, and he was taken away.

"Cut!" ordered the film director. "Good shoot everyone. We can take a quick break, relax for some minutes, and have some smoothie."

All of the actors poured off of the stage and took a seat at the smoothie bar to discuss their parts in the movie.

"I quite enjoyed my part," said the man who played Mr. Hautings while catching up with Jessica, who is a retired judge and just trying out a new career in acting. "I normally act nicer roles in the other movies I have been in"

"This scene actually uses my experience as a judge. I also enjoyed the sentencing as I believe it sends out a strong message that black lives matter. I'm excited about our next project and I think it will send another message."

Once they had finished their break, they went back to the stage and began another scene.

The King and the Cake

Matilda Rua

Once there was the Kingdom of the Blue Sea.

It was ruled by a good king, he loved people from the close by villages to come and stay in his town. He welcomed people from the kingdoms of the Yellow Desert, Pink Strawberries, Green Jungle and many more.

One day the good king died, and his evil brother called Greedy Geoff took over. He was called greedy because he spent all day eating cakes and sweets in fact, he was very big. Greedy Geoff didn't like that people from different kingdoms could mix, he thought that the Blue-Sea people were better than anyone else.

So, he divided the kingdom and built some walls to separate the town. From that day people were not allowed to mix, go to the same schools, use the same buses, shop in same supermarket or even use the same toilets!! The Blue people had the fanciest houses while the Yellows, Pinks and the Greens had very little space. Only the Blues were happy, everyone else was feeling miserable.

The ball falls to me, midway through the opposition's half, I do a classic move that my hero, Drogba, used to do. I am one-on-one with the keeper, who pulls me to the ground. The referee points to the penalty spot. I step up confidently to take the kick, recalling all the negative past in my career – the pain and the joy. This is my chance to send the world a positive message. I smash the ball with precision, into the bottom corner, and the net bundles. I run to the corner flag and rip my shirt off to show the vest! Life always gives us a chance to take a stand.

The Ballerina

Ella Kitui

"Jada!" Mum shouted. "The letter, it's here!"

Frantically I ran downstairs, my heart pounding like a drum. Trembling with excitement I scanned the envelope. It said National Ballet Company. Mum and I both looked at each other our eyes full of hope. Gruelling try-outs and competitions all lead up to this. Hands shaking my finger slid across the opening on the envelope.

Taking the letter out I read: "Dear Jada Trinity Jones, we are extremely pleased to inform you that you have been accepted into the National Ballet School!"

Screaming echoed through our house and we jumped up and down excitedly. I did it. I really did it. The first lesson started in a week's time which gave us time to buy the uniform. The next day we made our way to the shop and we still couldn't believe that I did it. You could see how proud my mum was, it was radiating off of her.

Entering the shop, we made our way to the tights section to find some flesh-coloured tights. To our

disappointment they only had different shades of pink, even though we looked everywhere. Confused, we went to the counter to ask if they had any tights in the shades of black, but he just looked at us confused. At this point my mum was raging inside, a volcano bubbling, how could they not have any tights my skin tone?

Disgusted we left the shop. Mum and I went to every dance shop that we could find but they were all the same. A shadow of doubt entered my head. Was this meant for me? I felt as if I wasn't supposed to be a ballerina that I didn't belong in the dance community. No! I worked hard for my scholarship and I belong.

It finally was the day of my first lesson. After a lot of googling and researching we finally found some tights my colour, but it wasn't easy. As I entered the room, I felt strong, prepared and confident. Quickly we started to warm up and then our teacher put us into a line. Excitement ran through my veins and I was full of adrenaline. As she was looking at everyone, she stopped at me. Yes, I thought she's noticed me. I stood up even taller ready for any criticism but then those 8 words she said to me hit me like a bullet.

"You're going to straighten your hair right? It's so we

can all be the same and you can blend in."

I couldn't believe it. I thought I could have my chance to stand out, be part of something, to feel welcome. All I got was disappointment and people looking at me as if I didn't belong. Just because I wasn't the same as everyone else they thought they could change me to be like them so we were all "uniform".

No! Dance isn't about blending it is about expressing and being yourself.

Racism

Isabel Nyaruwa

There is a monster within,
 But is not seen
 Sometimes it finds its way out
 Mostly hidden in plain sight
 The monster loathes diversity
 It's oblivious to hurting others
 It tramples others success
 It will go to the extent of killing someone because they
 are DIFFERENT
 It mangles your heart and spits it out
 Destroying you from within
 Spreading its venom to kill its prey
 The monster thinks it can treat others differently
 Because it believes it is more superior than others
 It believes that others aren't as civilised as its breed
 Just because the others are DIFFERENT
 Even though there is the monster within,
 Some have banished the monster and have changed

their ways
 They now see that they were wrong
 They now see that everyone is EQUAL
 The "others" are fighting for equality
 Fighting for their freedom
 The monster has been alive for centuries
 It is time to stop the monster
 I am one of the others
 I am DIFFERENT
 I am Anguished
 I am Devastated
 I am pained for all I have seen
 But... I have HOPE
 I believe that the monster's beliefs are wrong
 No one should be treated differently because of who
 they are
 Everyone is equal and should be treated the same
 Black lives matter.

Drumbeat

Laurie Wardill-Bartlett

For a long time, life in my village was good. But then came the darkness. Then came the storm. Or, as you might put it, the British arrived. Under the cover of dusk, they stole into our settlement and captured a group of tribes people. Then, for good measure, they burnt the village to the ground. Amongst the loot that they took back to their ship was me, and when they reached it, I was presented as a gift to the captain, a large man with a nasty smile and a nastier laugh.

The ship itself was an old wreck; the planks from which it was made were rotting, the sails smelled musty and the entire structure was a seething mass of rats. But worst of all were the cargo holds. That was where they kept the slaves. There were around six hundred slaves on that boat, and each of them was chained to a plank-bed with one toilet bucket to share between about forty of them. The stench was awful.

Worse still, on days when the sea was particularly rough, the captain would order the sailors to shut the

portholes, leaving the slaves gasping for air. Many of them got seasick at times like those, but I would prefer not to go into details. The days went by slowly, and throughout most of them I was kept in the captain's quarters. Only, every afternoon, I was taken out onto the deck and beaten by a sailor.

All the slaves were forced to dance to the slow, dull beat, and anyone who stepped even slightly out of rhythm was lashed with the cat o'nines. Of course, we were all thinking about the days when we were free to make our own music – the colourful mix of short beats and lyrical pipes that we had enjoyed so often.

During the later part of our long and dreadful voyage, two of the slaves, both from my village, were allowed on deck for a while. Their hands were bound together, but even still, as soon as they had the chance, they jumped overboard. I guess even death was a better option than staying on that boat. I just wish the others were as lucky. When we arrived in America, the slaves were sold to a tobacco plantation's owner and put to work in the fields. The last time I saw them, they were being led away, taken to a life of sorrow and despair.

Then the captain sold me to an old man who put me in a cart and drove me back to his home. But, as soon

as he got there, he put me in a darkened attic filled with crates and cobwebs. The man must have forgotten about me, as I stayed there for a long time. I don't know how long. But, in 1753, I was found and taken to the British museum. That's where I am now.

Oh, and, in case you're wondering, I'm a drum.

Welcome Home

Evelyn Williams

"Welcome home Social Experiment 021!! Utopolis has been designed for you to live in for the rest of your lives, you will never want to leave!" blasted through the radio as our convoy drove towards the gates, where I could see millions of trucks waiting for permission to enter.

The Overseer had promised us a utopian adventure. As the one-hundred metre gates opened, I excitedly peered out my window expecting to see luxurious lemonade fountains, grand buildings beyond my imagination and an ice-cream store on every corner! The groggy, dusty fog cleared as the eerie, rusty gates fully opened revealing this was nothing like our home back in LA, or the utopia promised.

This place was different, the surrounding land was dead, no trees, no grass and no animals. At the side of the road stood millions of people of colour, like me, waiting to be processed. It was becoming clear that this was an elaborate plan gathering us out of the way, to stop us

revolting. Other than the pounding noises coming from the convoy vans tyres and the blaring tannoy's there was nothing else to be heard. The sky was grey with thick black clouds trudging by. There were guards patrolling the walls, controlling what went in and what came out.

Eventually we arrived at our new home and it was then that I knew life would never be the same again. And I was right... I have noticed some very odd goings on. There are army vans at the end of every street during the night but by sunrise they are gone with no trace of them ever being there. Sometimes I would hear stories of how people would try to escape, however, I'm not sure if they did.

Occasionally, if you listen hard enough you hear their screams fading into the night. Their screams haunt me to this day. Last night I followed a van on a makeshift bike I created out of spare parts, all the way to an abandoned facility on the edge of town. I never would've followed it if it didn't contain my best friend Philippe.

The van entered through a large back door into a garage. I paused to think about what I would do next. I decided that it would be best for me to turn around and come back in the daylight. Just as I was about to turn, someone grabbed me from behind tightly on my

shoulders. They beat me to the ground and I slowly slipped into unconsciousness.

When I awoke, I was strapped to a cold, metal table, paralysed. I then noticed Philippe was attached to the table opposite me with dried blood staining his forehead. My name is Samir Salah, I am an Egyptian-American teenager growing up in one of the toughest times for people of colour. And I fear I do not have much time left.

2020 Hindsight

Maurice Griffin

It was getting late, but as usual Skye was doing her best to pretend she wasn't really about to fall asleep.

"Pllllleeeaaaase, Daddy? Just one last one?" she said, sitting up.

"OK, which one? It can even be a long one," he said, smiling.

"This one! This one! This one!" she said happily, dropping a book in her father's lap and launching herself into bed.

"This one?" he said. Skye's father looked down at the book and ran his fingers over the title. "I'd forgotten about this one. 2020: The Year the World Changed."

"What is it about, Daddy?" Skye said, looking at him oddly.

"Well it's about a time long before you were born," he chuckled. "It is when people judged others because of their skin colour."

Skye shrugged her shoulders and held out her hands

in question.

"The year the world changed," he started. "Covid-19 was first on our list, grasping our country with a full fist. From China it travelled contagion unfurled, we couldn't have known it would damage our world. We went into lockdown, using less stuff. Less plastic less petrol, was this enough? To rescue our planet, was this the first stage, To save our environment, start a new page? In 2020 the last major change, something that in 2050 seems so strange.

"They saw dark skin as a negative, policemen were brutal, their actions insensitive. A man called George Floyd, a father of four, was stopped by police just outside a store. His neck was forced down by a leg. 'I can't breathe!' he would beg. For over eight minutes that knee pushed down some, he coughed and spluttered and begged for his mum.

"At the disgusting death of George Floyd, the officer thought he could avoid being blamed for the end of a black man's life, and the heartbreak of four kids and a wife. But Floyd's life and death started a huge row. People would take a knee and people would bow. Racism had taken a huge bend. Was this finally to be the end? Now gone is the hatred and racist chatter, and we live in a world where Black Lives Matter."

Her dad closed the book softly. Skye smiled and turned over to face the window.

"Did people do really do that?" Skye said yawning, her eyes slowly closing.

Skye's father closed the book and bent over to kiss her head. "Well, not everyone, but some people were blind to prejudice and didn't even realise how hurtful their behaviour was."

He leaned on the door frame and turned out the light. "It's odd that 2020 was the year the rules distanced us, but in the end, it was the year that brought us together. Good night, Skye."

THE END

We Shall Rise

Iris Trehitt

"Okay. I can do this." Kara was fidgeting in her chair, her eyes closed thinking. She was applying for the job of Captain Of Deporian Warriors. This was her only chance.

"Kara Miller!" commanded the voice from the speakers.

Kara sighed and walked over to the large, wooden doors that were soon to let her into the room where her dream could come true.

"Hello, my name is Kara Miller, I am African-American and I live in square six. I really want this job. I think I would be a great captain because..."

"Next!"

"B-but!" Kara stuttered.

"I said NEXT!"

Kara stumbled out. "Don't cry! Don't let them see that they've got to you!"

She took a deep breath and pushed the doors to the interview room open. "Permission to speak to the Panelte."

"Granted!"

"You have no idea what my experience is! It's completely unfair!" argued Kara.

"Leave! How dare you speak to us like that!" they replied, and one of them slapped her across the face.

Stunned she ran. Tep! Tep! echoed her feet every time her boots hit the floor. She tripped. Darkness consumed her.

"Wake up! You're blocking the way!" Tiffany the blonde-haired, blue-eyed successful candidate was pulling her up, her sparkling captain badge glared in the sunlight, blinding her.

"So, did you get it?" questioned a friendly voice.

Kara ignored it and flopped onto her bed.

"I will take that as a no," came the voice again. It was Mala, Kara's best friend.

That night Kara couldn't sleep. She felt empty. She felt lonely. She felt unaccepted. She got out of bed and picked up her backpack. If this is how they are going to treat me just because of my colour, then they are down one warrior.

SHHK! Went the old, grubby window as Kara opened it.

"What are you doing, Kara? It's three in the morning!" whispered Mala.

"Errrm... I am just a bit hot, go back to sleep!" replied Kara.

Mala nodded sleepily and flopped back into her pillow, asleep in seconds.

Kara clambered out of the window and took a last look at her lifelong friend. How sad life was going to be without her. Sneaking through the security she kept on thinking: "Mala. I miss you already."

Once she reached the edge of the forest, she pulled up her hood and didn't look back. Whilst Kara was gathering sticks to make a fire she could only think about how unequal The Paneltes had been to her.

"Maybe The Paneltes need enlightening?" was the thought that hit her hard, as the fire flickered. As she bit into her bread she knew that she needed to make sure she saw Mala again. The next morning Kara woke up knowing she had to go back. She knew there needed to be change. She knew that everyone else who is black needed to be treated the same.

"We shall rise!" And she marched back to the city.

Equality Matters

Kelsey Hamilton

I forced myself to run, faster and faster until my exhausted feet barely skimmed the pavement: I darted down an alleyway, completely concealed from the street, and collapsed onto the dusty ground. My heart pulsated rapidly in my chest as I felt my body tremble in fear. Why wasn't I more cautious?

The narrow passageway was dead, it seemed as if nobody had stepped foot down it for centuries, and the abhorrent metallic smell only worsened my nausea. The roaring hollers of the people sent violent shivers down my spine – the broad-shouldered blue men swept through the street, their huge black boots ricocheting on the roads. They were gone.

Silence invaded the once rowdy street: it enclosed me like a thick blanket, roaring in my ears, and I desperately clamped my hands on either side of my whirling head. Embracing my knees against my chest, I could feel my heart thudding, like a rhythmic drum, seemingly bringing

me a sense of comfort and warmth in the darkening alley. A tidal wave of emotions overwhelmed me as I rested my throbbing head onto my knees, so that I was curled into a tight bubble of protection. Tears prickled my eyes; they refused to stay hidden, and waterfalls of sorrow cascaded down my cheeks. They tasted bitter, like droplets of pure poison burning my dark skin, an unwanted reminder of the pain I was experiencing.

Why was I, just an innocent girl, being mistreated just because of my race? Why was I discriminated against, and seen as a threat? Why was I frightened to walk down my street, in case I was treated brutally by policemen? Why was my race and my skin targeted and treated differently? What did I do to deserve this treatment? A hurricane of questions penetrated my mind, yet for none of them I could think of an answer.

Uncurling from my position, I attempted to calm my breathing, yet my tears were stubborn, now huge uncontrollable drops sliding off my cheeks. I outstretched one of my arms, gently inspecting it, although it was a different colour to white skin, I saw no difference. Then I repeated the process with my other arm, my skin was a different colour, yet I still saw no different. They were still

normal arms. My skin was black, yet it was still skin. We all bleed the same crimson blood, and we all breathe the same oxygen. So why is my race treated differently?

Suddenly, a growing noise filled the street – I snapped out of my daydream to the yells and cries of crowds. Apprehensive, I shrank into the darkness like a terrified mouse, as a shadow loomed over the alley. Squeezing my eyes shut, I was surprised when a pale hand was offered out to me, helping my paralysed body stand. A girl my age smiled at me compassionately: in one hand she clutched a large banner, reading “Black Lives Matter”.

“A princess like you should not be discriminated against.”

At the Age of *Saumyah Singh*

My name is... actually that's not important, but my story is. When I was 5, we left Sierra Leone and travelled a long journey all the way to England, for my mum's job. I joined a new school and in Year 1 made a few friends. There were some strange, big changes to my life at the time but I got used to it pretty quickly!

At the age of 7, my favourite thing to do was to play with barbie dolls! I wanted to look like one, that's how much I adored them. My friends and I would bring our Barbies into school and talk about which doll looked similar to which girl. All of my friends had a doll that looked like them but not me... Why didn't any of those barbie dolls look like me? Why were they all light skinned?

I soon grew out of my barbie phase and completely forgot about them. At the age of ten, I had a passion to do realistic drawings of people, and I loved to colour them in too. One day I tried to draw myself, and I asked my friend for a skin coloured pencil. She didn't reply so I look up at

her, and she looked back at me in confusion. There was a skin coloured pencil for white people but not for black people? I never finished that drawing.

At the age of eleven, I joined high school! There were a few more black people than at primary school but not too many. When I joined, I quickly realised that people aren't always kind. Nobody ever said anything racist directly to my face, but the racism was always there. Whether it was "just a joke" or "word". I'm lucky nobody ever physically hurt me though.

At the age of fifteen, I started wearing make-up, but I soon realised that there wasn't a shade of foundation for my skin colour. The range for lighter skin colour was large, but when I looked for foundation for my tone the "range" only consisted of three different colours. Not even the biggest companies had a skin tone for everyone.

At the age of twenty-one I was shopping in a store. The employees were following me around the shop and watching me weirdly. After a while I became uncomfortable, so I turned around and asked the employee why he was following me. He replied "just for safety!" I left the shop and didn't come back.

In the year of 2020, an unarmed black man named

George Floyd was brutally killed by being restrained by the police. His death sparked many people to fight for Black Lives Matter. On social media, the news, and protests. The movement has not just spread in the USA, it is spreading worldwide. People are listening, things are changing. Solutions are being made, problems are being solved. We all have a voice, and we need to use it for the good, make your own story...

Innocence

Nkosazana Khawula

"Officer, please!" I scream, my voice hoarse from the lack of oxygen. The man in blue ignores me, pushing my head into the pavement even harder than he was just mere seconds ago. Arms behind my back, hands trapped in handcuffs, stripping my freedom away from me. Then, I hear her voice.

"Michael!? That's my son! Let go of him, please!" My mother's desperate, heart-wrenching cries are caught on various smartphones as the police hold her back. An officer pulls out a gun, aiming at my mother. Panic takes over my body as I realise that my mother's in danger. I struggle and try to resist, to protect the woman that has loved me ever since I was born. But I can't, I can't. I can't.

"Don't do it! Don't kill her, kill me!" I plead and my sobs are caught in my throat. I feel pain everywhere, my lungs, my legs, my arms and the most excruciating pain is in my heart. The man pinning me to the ground was supposed to help me. I was scared for my life when a white man pulled out a gun and aimed it at me, and this is

the result of breaking that one rule that every single black person must know. Never call the police if you're in trouble. Call a relative, friend, anyone. Anyone but the police or else they'll kill you.

A loud bang rings in my ears as I assume that I've just been shot, but I don't feel any pain. I open my eyes hesitantly, praying to see my mother safe and healthy. She jumps back, an officer shot a bullet just inches away from her foot, a warning shot. This is all my fault. I should've never called the police.

Suddenly, a white man steps out from the crowd, anger written on his face. The officers are silent as he steps closer, stopping as he begins to shout.

"Officers, how dare you pin an innocent man to the ground!? Take your hands off of this man and release him! He did nothing wrong. He called you because he was afraid. He was scared of that man that was going to hurt him!" The officers freeze, and surprisingly, they let me go. I hug the man that just saved my life and thank him.

"And he lived happily ever after! That was the story of your grandfather, kids. Now get to bed!" my grandma exclaims, smiling at us as she hugs us both tightly.

My brother does as she says, but I stay put. "That

white man didn't really help. They killed grandad, didn't they?" I question.

My grandma freezes, tears leaving her eyes as she frowns. She shakes her head slowly, grief in her eyes.

"Yes, you're right dear," she whispers back as she steps towards me, wrapping her loving arms around me. "Go to sleep now, okay?"

I nod, turning to run upstairs, joining my brother in the bathroom to prepare for bed.

Hands Where I Can See Them

Ella Rose Palmer

"Stop."

The words cut into me like knives, piercing my skin. I turned around with my hands above my head. Overwhelmed by the police, flashing lights and guns, I dropped to my knees. I took rapid breaths and my eyes squinted as a bright light was shined harshly in them.

"Get up."

The owner of the voice wore a blue uniform, complete with a badge and sneer. I knew what to do. I stood up, lifted my arms above my head and stared at the ground. My heart beat so fast that I thought it would shatter but I knew what to do. Do what they say. Don't run, don't move quickly, don't answer back. Moving makes the police nervous, Dad told me. Put your hands where they can see them, he said. Put your hands exactly where they can see them.

"Stop."

I'd heard of police stopping cars but I never thought

it would happen to me. Yawning, I got out my car and pulled out my ID. I squinted as an officer shone a light in our eyes – I was too tired for this. Suddenly, I noticed Rue trembling. She stood with her hands in the air as an officer pointed his gun and his torch in her face. I quickly recoiled as I saw the smirk that he wore, accompanied by the reflection of the blue and red flashing lights burning in his eyes. He seemed to delight in holding us by gunpoint for no reason at all, maybe it made him feel powerful, invincible.

But then I realised something. He didn't seem to enjoy holding "us" by gun point – no, he hadn't said a word to me since we got pulled over. Instead, he seemed to delight in terrifying Rue. Deep breaths, I told myself. Slowly, I raised my eye line and defiantly looked the officer in the eyes.

"We didn't do anything wrong," I began to say, never breaking eye contact, never giving him a reason to get angry.

"Shut up!" he yelled, pushing me against the car door. "Put your hands behind your head!" He shouted again. I saw the cold hard stare he gave me; one of hatred and contempt. I saw how I looked in his eyes, disgusting. To him, I was nothing.

I watched in horror as the officer pushed Rue against

the car door. But I couldn't just stand by, I needed to do something!

"Let her go!" I shouted loudly. "She didn't do anything wrong!"

The officer looked in my direction and suddenly I didn't feel so big. I saw his gun. He slowly began to saunter in my direction.

"You," he spat at me, "can go home."

I was confused – what had either of us done?

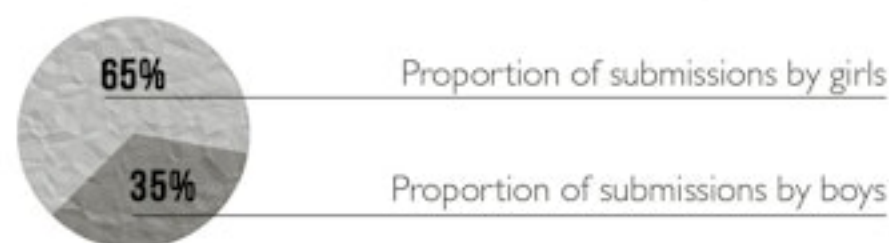
"She's... different," he said with a smirk. But the only difference I could see between us was our skin colour. Indignation filled my eyes, but before I knew what was happening, he'd dragged Rue into his car and they were gone.



EXTRA BITS

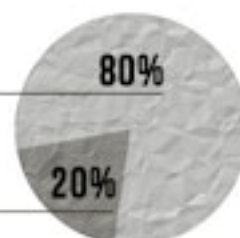
OXFORD CORPUS CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE REPORT 2020

Since 2012 a group of very clever people at Oxford University Press has looked at the language used by children for the '500 Words' competition as part of their ongoing research into language written for and by children. This year, they've looked closely at the stories submitted by children to '500 Words: Black Lives Matter 2020', and here are some of the most interesting findings from their research:



Percentage of stories written by children aged 10-13 years

Percentage of stories written by children aged 5-9 years



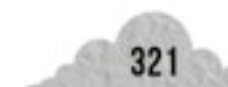
Some other really fascinating facts:

- For '500 Words: BLM' the most used name was George Floyd. Before, the top famous names for 8 years running were Santa and Cinderella.
- BLM is a new word not previously recorded in children's writing.
- Other words that were used a lot included protest, racism, racist, equal and rights.
- The word protest was used a whopping 3730% more than in '500 Words 2020'.
- There were more 'happy' words than 'sad' words used in '500 Words: BLM' with 62% of words being classed as 'happy' and only 38% classed as 'sad'. This is slightly lower than '500 Words 2020' with 68% 'happy' words and 32% 'sad' words.
- Loads of positive messages can be seen in the stories, with fantastic phrases like 'proud to be black' and 'proud to be me' used more times than previously.
- In other children's writing the word colour appears in the context of describing things like the sun / gleaming white teeth / a peach / carrots / snow / rainbow / the sky / deep, blue sea. In '500 Words: BLM', colour is mainly used in the context of the colour of my/your/ their skin.

The findings of this report reflect the inventiveness of children today as well as their empathy and engagement with serious issues and campaigns.

500 Words: Black Lives Matter data and insights are from the Oxford Children's Corpus* and the Children's Dictionaries and Children's Language department at Oxford University Press.

*The Oxford Children's Corpus is a growing database of writing for and by children developed and maintained by Oxford University Press for the purpose of children's language research.





MALORIE BLACKMAN: WRITING TIPS

Writing stories is about the exploration of your main character's life through their actions, thoughts and feelings. Writing is such a wonderful way to create. You can create new people, new situations, even new worlds if you want to. What do you want to write about? Is there a particular topic or subject matter that appeals to you? Is there an idea you want to investigate? Then go for it!

You can create characters to put into a situation to see how they would cope, what they would do. Maybe create characters who are the complete opposite to you in a number of ways to explore their actions and reactions to the many obstacles they have to overcome in your story. I always say that creating new characters is a great way to live many lives at once as it feels like everything that happens to my characters happens to me as well – the good, the bad and the ugly. I feel the joy and the sadness that my characters experience. That can sometimes make writing uncomfortable but always rewarding.

Do you have a favourite space or place? Maybe you could create a character or characters to explore that place which could be a moment in time. Remember, your main character doesn't have to be human. It could be an animal, an alien from another planet, a legendary creature, a person with special powers, even a made-up creature. Or maybe the place itself could be a character.

How does your character speak? Do they have a particular way of expressing themselves? Have fun with exploring the different ways your characters could do that. They don't need to structure

their sentences in the same way that you do.

What does your character do? Who are they at the start of your story and how are they different at the end? What happens to them to make them different? What do they want at the start of the story? What is stopping them from getting it? How do they overcome all the obstacles in their way? Do they do it on their own? Do they have help? Are they resentful or grateful for any help they receive? What have they learned – if anything – by the end of the story? Have they helped others along the way, or have they only helped themselves? Have their opinions and/or attitudes changed by the time the story finishes? These are all questions to keep in mind when creating your story. You don't need to answer all of them. Maybe it's enough to answer just one of them. It's your story so it's entirely up to you.

Most importantly, have fun. If you enjoy writing your story, we're more likely to enjoy reading it. If your characters surprise you, make you laugh, make you cry, make you gasp, make you think, then hopefully that's what they'll do to us too. Enjoy yourself.

Happy writing!

Malorie Blackman



FRANK COTTRELL-BOYCE: WRITING TIPS

First: switch on your computer.

NO! Don't touch that power button! Trying to write on a computer is like trying to paint your nails on a log flume. Too many distractions! You need a pen and a piece of paper and somewhere comfy to sit.

Second: make sure that before you start you have a brilliant idea...

NOOOO!! Don't wait. People always ask writers where they get their ideas from and they always lie about it. The secret truth is... great ideas for stories come WHILE YOUR WRITING. So grab any old idea. Steal one. It doesn't matter. I absolutely promise you that five minutes after you've started, you'll start having better ideas.

Third: plan everything very carefully. Maybe draw a graph or a mind map.

NOOOO!!! Don't do that. You're writing a story not building an airport. Just dive in and have fun. If it goes wrong you can always start again. You don't need a plan. You just need to sit down and do it.

Fourth: always check the spelling before you write a word down and make sure your handwriting is neat.

NOOOOO!!!! Seriously we don't care about the spelling. And don't worry about making it neat. You're going to rewrite this anyway so you can be as scruffy as you like.

Fifth: when you're finished take care to hide your story away so

that no one can steal your idea.

NOOOOOOOO!!!!!! That's a seven "o" seven exclamation mark no. The loudest no of all. Because the very best thing you can do with your story is to share it. And you begin sharing it by reading it out loud. Read it to someone you trust. If you don't trust anyone but yourself read it out loud to yourself. Maybe record yourself reading it and then play it back. But whatever you do make sure you read it out loud. Reading a story out loud is the very best way in the world ever of finding out whether it works or not. Read it out loud.

Sixth: when you're reading it out loud you'll find that some bits work and some bit don't. Keep the bits that work and fix the bits that don't.

Yes. That's completely right.

Now go and write.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce



FRANCESCA SIMON: WRITING TIPS

I hope these fantastic stories inspire you to write your own. Here are some tips to get you started.

Finish what you start. Don't just write lots of beginnings. Try writing the end first, THEN the beginning and the middle if you're stuck.

Writing in the first person is easier than writing in the third. But remember, WHO your narrator is influences HOW they tell the story. The robber will tell the story very differently from the policewoman who catches him.

Ideas are everywhere. Keep a notebook and jot down anything that strikes you. A thought. A dream. A joke. A bit of dialogue.

Think of the story as a journey. How is your character different at the end from the beginning? What's happened to them to make this change? The middle of a story is what I call the TWIST – what causes your character's life to change? Ask lots of questions. The answers will be your story.

Another way to create a character is to ask yourself questions to find out who they are. Where do they live? What do they look like? Who are their friends? Who are their enemies? What do they care about? And, most important, what do they WANT more than anything? And WHO or WHAT is stopping them getting what they want? For example, Cinderella wants more than anything...to go to the ball. What's stopping her is poverty and her mean, horrible step-sisters.

The main way I develop my characters is through dialogue. Let HOW your characters speak reveal what they're like. For example, Horrid Henry and Perfect Peter. I put them into lots of different situations, and I listen to what they say and write it down.

Here they are, fighting as usual.

'Don't call me Ugly, Toad!'

'Don't call me Toad, Ugly!'

This tells you we are listening to two brothers who fight all the time. Who call each other names. Who are aggressive.

Or listen to this:

'You're the meanest parents in the world and I hate you!' shrieked Horrid Henry.

'You're the best parents in the world and I love you,' said Perfect Peter. This tells you how competitive they are and how much sibling rivalry they have.

I think of characters as people I want to get to know, and who want to get to know me. So say hi to them, and hear what they have to say.

Another great way to come up with a good idea is to mix up different types of story. For example:

<i>Ghost</i>	<i>Mystery</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Horror</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Detective</i>	<i>Science-fiction</i>	<i>Romance</i>
<i>Comedy</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Magic</i>	
<i>Animal</i>	<i>Fantasy</i>	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Fairy tale</i>

Now mix up two (or more) of them. Horror/romance could be two zombies who fall in love. Science fiction/detective could be a time traveller from the future who solves modern mysteries. School/Magic could be a school for witches or wizards or geniis or vampires or unicorns...

Happy reading (and writing!)

Francesca Simon



CHARLIE HIGSON: WRITING TIPS

ONCE UPON A TIME

People are always arguing about what makes human beings different to other animals. Are we cleverer? Well, recent research shows that birds are pretty smart, actually – even chickens are cleverer than anyone thought (although I've never seen one on University Challenge.) Are we the only creatures to use language, then? Maybe... but bees have a way of communicating by doing a little dance, chimps use sign language, and birds use Twitter.

I think the thing that makes us different is that we're the only ones to tell stories. Humans make sense of the world by telling stories about it. It's how we understand people and history and our emotions... everything. And each of our lives is a story in itself.

I've been lucky enough to make a living telling stories. Yes – I'm basically paid to make stuff up. But we all do it all the time. We tell stories about our day, about what someone said to us, about a funny thing that happened at the weekend. And think of the stories you can't forget, how they will always be with you.

I hope you enjoy the stories in this book, and I hope they inspire you to write some stories of your own. Because it's fun and it's what makes us human. Actually, I've just had an idea for a good start to a story. 'There was this chicken, and she always dreamed of going on University Challenge...'



ABOUT CORAM BEANSTALK

Our mission is to create a generation of readers for life who have the skills and confidence to reach their true potential, whatever their life circumstances. Too often too many children are left behind. We want to change this.

That's why we recruit, train and support volunteers to give one-to-one reading support to help children aged 3-13 to become confident, passionate and able readers. These are often children who, for whatever reason, may have become disengaged with reading and can find it a struggle.

As a result of our forty-seven years of experience in creating readers, we are also able to offer a series of training programmes both to the wider community and directly to educational settings, for people who want to help their own children, or other children they read with, to learn to read for pleasure whilst improving reading skills.

In partnership with The Black Lives Matter 500 Words we want to ensure those children from the BAME communities are supported even more. With any funds raised we will seek out more partner schools to ensure we reach the most disadvantaged BAME children. We will also recruit more volunteers from these communities to help us in our work.

We also know how important it is to engage children in reading that they see themselves reflected in the books they are offered. We are committed to providing a diverse range of inclusive titles and any funds raised will help us to increase the books we offer.

Together we can help children on a path to becoming a reader.

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500 Words



Black lives Matter