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Winners announced for Norfolk's largest creative writing competition for young people

Young Norfolk Writing Competition Showcase takes place tonight at 6pm GMT
on YouTube

The winners of the 2020 Young Norfolk Writing Competition – Norfolk's largest annual creative writing competition for young people aged 11 – 18 – have been announced alongside the identity of the fourth Young Norfolk Laureate.

The annual competition, which celebrates creative writing in all its forms, is a partnership between the National Centre for Writing (NCW) and Young Norfolk Arts (YNA). It received a record number of entries in 2020 with over 500 young people in the region submitting their freshest, boldest work.

Hannah Garrard, Learning and Participation Programme Manager, NCW said:

'The fact that young people in Norfolk have been writing so creatively and eloquently throughout these difficult past months is a testament to their strength of character and resilience. Never has access to writing, reading and books felt more important for this generation of creatives. Giving young people a platform to express themselves is what the YNWC is all about and it's been an honour to read their work this year.'

Lucy Farrant, Director of the Young Norfolk Arts Trust, said;

‘It is a great honour to partner with NCW on delivering the competition and hosting the awards event. It is always one of my favourite parts of every Young Norfolk Arts Festival as it is a joy to celebrate the talent of all of our young writers and for them to inspire their peers and future generations.’

The winners of the Yong Norfolk Writing Competition 2020 (in alphabetical order) are:

- Mathilda Armiger, 18, Paston College
- Florence Bullion, 14, City of Norwich School
- Kasey Challenger, 18, Dereham Sixth Form College
- Jessica Creedon, 17, Notre Dame Sixth Form
- Ella Cunningham, 13, Norwich High School for Girls
- Mathilda Peak, 13, Litcham Secondary School
- Ryan Taffee-Fowle, 18, Wymondham College

A further 12 young writers received commendation from the judges.

The competition is supported by Norfolk County Council and Arts Council England and focuses on engaging young people to become more involved with the arts while celebrating the writing talent in the region. Entries could take the form of stories, lyrics, narrative for games, graphic stories, poems, spoken word, scripts, podcasts, plays, articles, journalism or essays.

Robert Rickard, 14 – 19 Advisor for NCC, said:

‘The competition is a great collaborative initiative that we are delighted to support each year. Across the UK, writing talent remains hidden among many thousands of young people: we are proud to help many of our young writers express and develop their ability.’

For the first time, the 2020 Young Norfolk Laureateship will be awarded to three young people: Mathilda Armiger, Kasey Challenger and Ryan Taffee-Fowle. Over the next 12 months they will work as a collective, receiving creative and professional development opportunities from NCW and working towards an original collaboration to be performed next year.

Ryan Taffee-Fowle said:

‘I am very grateful for this opportunity. Growing up I always struggled with English but still enjoyed it, so finding poetry gave me an effective outlet that wasn’t constrained by any set rules.

This laureateship will give me many opportunities but perhaps the most exciting is the platform to show other young people how powerful their words can be.’

Last year’s Laureate Colette Maxwell-Preston, 13, showed great commitment to the programme and dedicated much of her writing to raising awareness of climate change.

Watch the Young Norfolk Writing Competition Showcase

In celebration of the 2020 Young Norfolk Writing Competition and the breadth of young creative talent developing across the county, a special showcase event will be hosted by [Young Norfolk Arts Festival](#) this evening, 6pm BST, over on YouTube Live.

The event has been organised by NCW’s [Lit From the Inside](#) team of aspiring young arts professionals and will feature readings from winning and highly commended writers and a performance from local musician Jess Morgan. Everyone is invited to tune in – no booking required. Visit the YNAF YouTube channel from 6pm: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKclyoImEJwNGoNFB3YNELQ/live>

For further information on the Young Norfolk Writing Competition, visit

nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ynwc/

/Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. For comment and photos contact Steph McKenna, Communications Manager at steph@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk / 01603 877177
2. The National Centre for Writing (NCW) is a literature development organisation based in Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature. The National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall promotes great literature, inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. NCW's key stakeholder funders are Arts Council England, the University of East Anglia and Norwich City Council.
www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk
3. Young Norfolk Arts Trust celebrate and support the creativity of all young people in Norfolk, throughout the year, and during the Young Norfolk Arts Festival www.ynaf.org.uk
4. Winning entries:

'An impromptu nonsensical' by Florence Bullion, 14, City of Norwich School

Do you ever just
walk in the woods
and as you pause for a moment, it dawns upon you
that this is perfect

and this is the air, this is the whimsical charm from which fairy tales are spun
it hangs arctic yet soft around your face
pure and still, frozen
and clambers up from deep inside you

the child within
slips into your mind, lolls in the nonsensical glow of long-dormant wonder
and grasps the reins
as you hesitate -

and just for a slight moment, this picture stiffens and sets
bleeds in vibrant inks into the wrinkled melodies of a fairy tale
locked, trapped in time
a rare, simple impression - a fossil of gleam and glimmer

and yet in a few seconds
it is swept aside, that curious stillness, ripped and ruptured by the nimble dance of time
and it is gone
forever

An extract from 'Satsuma' by Mathilda Armiger, 18, Paston College

It was long past lunchtime. Other people drunk from frosted pitchers under the soft seams of trees behind the house, or dozed inside the cool shuttered rooms, and here I sat, in quiet agony, watching you pick the pith off each segment of satsuma, and listen to you talk about the neighbours son, who's name the other girls savoured on their lips.

'What do you think of him?' You asked, wiping away juice from the corners of your mouth. I shrugged. We both knew he had always liked you. When we went dancing, or drinking at the beach he would watch you with that soft, unguarded way, which I knew from experience meant only one thing.

'He's fine,' I said, 'If you like that sort of thing.'

You laughed, and leant back in your chair, stretching out your sandaled feet until they were an inch from my own.

My breath snagged somewhere in my chest.

'He's an idiot really-' and I saw your eyes narrow like almonds '- but he's really besotted with me. He keeps leaving me poems.'

I watched you push your dark hair from your forehead, and wanted to speak, to say what I knew, the only thing I knew, and I wanted you to know too, so desperately my lungs threatened to burst bird-like from my ribcage. But cowardice is too warm and comfortable a habit to betray. So I said nothing, simply plucked at my skirt, nursing the satsuma sized pain glowing just above my heart.

An extract from 'The Brazen Bull Part 1' by Kasey Challenger, 18, Dereham Sixth Form College

In Ancient Greece it is alleged that on its pedestal stands
A gleaming, brass bull operated by an evil tyrant's hands
An innocent hollowed out life-sized bull yet no one mentions how pleasant the statue looks on its golden pedestal
The whole town looks so different though, come nightfall
When life is finally breathed into the dreaded brazen bull
A fire is lit underneath and the bull burns red with fury and torment
A man looks to his wife and son while he's thrown into the bull over the rent
Through the thoughtfully positioned pipes and whistles
The sounds of the screams are translated to mimic the sounds of a living bull

An extract from 'Mother tucking children into bed' by Jessica Creedon, 17, Notre Dame Sixth Form

She leans over her children (their children) in a way that reminds him of a white swan, magnificently bowing its long feathered neck towards the water, eyes forever bound to its own. If he's her monarch, she's his swan, condemned to a life of swimming in her own reflection, her painting plastered over every copy of 'Literary Digest'. She's his in the same way that Helen was Paris'; her picture stains his canvas for eternity. She cannot escape it, run from it. She was his muse long before she slipped his golden band onto her slim finger, his muse long before long before the day he carried her over their threshold, promising to protect her from all harm; love her, cherish her, forsake all else. He cannot help but draw her, she draws herself in his mind every night,

dancing into his dreams and nightmares until he wakes, pen poised, brush readied, her figure slowly working into the frame.

An extract from 'Giving' by Ella Cunningham, 13, Norwich High School for Girls

Ten minutes later, my breath was still coming in short gasps. Everywhere ached, a dull, monotonous ache that seeped into every part of my body. On the earth next to me lay a baby, my baby. Motionless she lay, eyes closed peacefully in a serene calmness. It couldn't be, I wasn't giving up quite yet. Gently, I nudged her, touching her soft skin untouched by life and all the scars it gives you.

My baby finally took her first breath just as I was ready to give up on her. She opened her starry eyes and looked around in wonder. Her body quivered delicately, her eyes blinked quickly as if everything might disappear if she closed her eyes for too long. I was in a surreal dream, my baby, my beautiful foal was perfect. Our eyes met, and all the pain I had endured for her didn't matter, my gaze saying what I could not.

An extract from 'War' by Mathilda Peak, 13, Litcham Secondary School KS3 prose 'War' - WINNER

As I drift across the battlefield, just a breeze to the grass, the smell of gunpowder and cordite reaches my nostrils. I can hear men's faint whimpering over the sound of gunshots and rumbling tanks. Dark bags sag beneath their eyes, a sign of just how tremendous this war is. Despite the fear in their eyes, cloaked by their determined set of jaw, they keep firing their lethal weaponry. It is get killed by the enemy or be killed for cowardice. Only terror anchors them to this war-stricken place.

I have seen many wars in my time. Nothing changes. There will always be people who believe that if we are from a different culture, a different heritage, if we have a different skin colour, then we are less. Wars break out everywhere. This war is like any other: people who are oblivious as to why they are fighting, artillery and wounds everywhere.

I am death.

An extract from 'Pocketed Poetry' by Ryan Taffee-Fowle, 18, Wymondham College

My poetry is hidden, out of sight from the perverse and peevish people.
My poetry is a paragon at the pinnacle of my persona.
My poetry is a part of me, it follows me, I keep it in my pocket
Thus my poetry becomes pocketed.

See now my pocketed poetry is powerful, they say the pen will best the sword but I can do one better I will jest you with my words and assault you with my sentences, for I could pick you and place you in a ring with me and punch you to an inch of your life, however, my powerful pocketed poetry will perturb you in quite the perfunctory way. For as I said, the pinnacle of my plethora of peevish options to best you is the prerogative that hides in my pocket. My pocketed poetry is pertinent and powerful.