

Winning Poems from the 2020 Ten Line Poetry Competition

1st Prize Winner

Mother's Day 2020

After hearing about the Italian nurses

Who died in the battle

I jumped in the car to deliver tulips and fell

Fell in love with those white lines on the carriageway

That delivered me safely through the bend

Also with the barriers and their chevrons

I had it bad for signage and its history

The watercolour wash of clear sky and later,

Every blade of grass that seemed to know

Exactly how far it needed to bend

David Tulley

2nd Prize Winner

No change

Cash only, says the grey machine

Ten paces from the automated doors

Turn left for wards, turn right for gifts, too brightly lit

The till confusing for the aproned volunteer

Sorry love, no change

I buy a magazine and Exit Here

Coins in my fingers aching cold

No tapping cards or chip and pin

No parking apps or Apple pay

No change, no change at all today.

Kate Lee

3rd prize winner

Lockdown diary – Tuesday July 14; the spin of the virus ketchup bottle

virus ketchup spins ring a ring of roses now you see me now you don't
on its plastic bottle axis arcing droplets from your watch

loose change fingers pocketfuls of posies pre-packed for immediate use
in touchscreen queues at ticket machines pick up a Metro for me in direct sunlight

atishyou opens the tomato sauce over a cheese and ham sandwich
atishyou licks your lips at the menu's full English with a cup of tea or coffee 4.99

your postcode's search for a new sponsor able to take the brand forward
as an atishyou atishyou nears you and you and you in the distance

facetime goodbye waves mum and dad's smiles in their front room
slow virus ketchup's roulette wheel to point atishyou atishyou we'll all fall down

Dave Simpson

Judge's Comments

Concision is key: there's no time to explain context in depth. As a result, many of the best competition entries relied on silence and implication, on the reader using their imagination to feed on nuances and unpack subtexts. Inevitably the current COVID-19 pandemic influenced a significant number of entries and, in fact, all three of the prize-winning poems focus on nurses, hospitals and/or the coronavirus.

Each time I read the winning poem, 'Mother's Day, 2020', I liked it more and more. Its oblique handling of recent events and the way it invites the reader to engage with its closing imagery make it an absorbing, poignant piece that repays close attention. Similarly, the second-placed poem doesn't spell out its back story, relying instead on the layered nature of the phrase 'no change'. The third-placed poem employs welcome experimentation with its ruptured lines multiplying the ways that its daring images can be interpreted.

John McCullough 2020

Dr John McCullough is a widely published, award winning poet. His recent collection Reckless Paper Birds won the Hawthornden prize for literature; awarded for overall best UK book of the year and for its 'originality and boldness'; following in the footsteps of Alice Oswald and Ali Smith. Reckless Paper Birds, explores vulnerability and the human body. He lives in East Sussex and teaches creative writing courses at the University of Brighton, The Arvon Foundation and New Writing South.

Highly Commended Poems

Antony Mair	<i>Anniversary</i>
Mandy Pannett	<i>Man on a Wire</i>
Stevie Reeves	<i>Half and Half_ (ha:f and hæf)</i>

Commended Poems

Mary Allen	<i>Fierce Lick</i>
Lottie Angell	<i>Caked</i>
Robin Boothroyd	<i>Josephine</i>
Andrew Breckenridge	<i>Recovery</i>
Joe Bunn	<i>Like Any Grand Canvas</i>
Jill Fricker	<i>Storm Surfer</i>
Chris Hardy	<i>Verona</i>
“	<i>Banished Children of Eve</i>
Tess Jolly	<i>Notes from the Resilience Workshop</i>
Jane Maker	<i>Calvary in 10</i>
Diane Moulton	<i>Metal Man</i>
Mandy Pannett	<i>Enter Ariel, Invisible</i>
David Roberts	<i>Heatwave</i>
Lia Burge Rogers	<i>Severance</i>
Dave Simpson	<i>Lockdown diary – Wednesday April 15; childhood memories unfurling</i>
Peter Strong	<i>Hillwalking</i>
Cherrie Taylor	<i>Cryptolepas rhachianecti</i>
“	<i>“into a strange party...”</i>
Jane Thorp	<i>The Theory of Relationship Relativity</i>
Louise Winters	<i>A bristle of virtual reality</i>

All of the above poems are in the Competition **Anthology**, which can be purchased for £5 [here](#)

