

English Literature in Lockdown

Quarantine Poetry Anthology
By Tara, Year 11



Foreword

I decided to write a quarantine poetry anthology. Some of the poems are about more humorous aspects of quarantine, others are about the more emotional aspects of isolation. A couple of poems are not directly linked to quarantine, but the long periods of isolation I was experiencing allowed me to come up with different ideas, so I thought I'd include them too. In this foreword I am going to explain a little bit about each poem and the motivations behind each of them. I advise reading the poems first than reading the explanation so you can get your own interpretation first rather than just going with mine.

Acrostic poem - The acrostic poem was the first poem I wrote. It spells of 'COVID-19'. It's a fairly short poem, but it's a hopeful one too. I tried to convey the sense that we were fighting a battle with the coronavirus and that we must win. When you think about quarantine as you waging war against the virus, it changes your perspective. Suddenly you become more determined, that you are going to play your part in this 'war' by staying at home and following government guidelines. It's a nicer way to think about isolation rather than to think about being alone all the time and not being allowed to go out.

The Daily Exercise Haiku - At the time this was written, we were only allowed pit once a day for exercise. In some ways the haiku is a very good way to convey the experience of how short the time you're outside feels compared to inside, because the poem feels like it's over before it's begun. It basically shows how you feel you must make sure that this exercise is sufficient because you know you can't go out again afterwards.

A limerick concerning my lunch - I decided to have a go at a limerick to add a bit more humour to the anthology. This is a funny poem about the fact that every lunch is now leftovers from previous meals - sometimes I find myself eating the same thing for lunch two or three times in a row.

My GCSEs - a villanelle - I only recently discovered the villanelle as a style of poetry and this was my first attempt at writing one. Villanelle have a very set structure and rhyme scheme with a lot of repetition. Due to the repetition villanelle are usually use to convey obsession. In this poem, I was trying to express how after my GCSEs were cancelled I realised that I'd spent almost all my time preparing for them and I become almost fixated on them (hence the 'my life was that GCSE). This poem conveys how I felt in then first few days after hearing the news, when the shock was still settling in that something I'd been working towards since the start of my secondary school life wasn't going to happen.

The Eternal King - This isn't a specific type of poem. Being in quarantine has made me think about more philosophical questions and some of these are shown in this poem. The poem basically shows how humans think that they're so powerful but they can be crushed very easily. The last two stanzas are from the perspective of G-d, showing how compared to Him all things on earth are 'nothing'. The last line 'breaks' the pattern of four line stanzas and instead of 'I am the king' it says 'I am the Eternal King' showing how this omnipotent G-d does is not confined to the normal rules that govern the universe.

I don't want to be at home - This was an experiment with a new idea I came up with. At first the phrase 'I don't want to be at home' is one line in the stanza, but slowly it gets repeated more and more until the last stanza is the phrase repeated four times. This shows how slowly an idea or emotion can start to take over everything in your life until it's all you can think about.

A Breslover sonnet - This isn't about quarantine exactly but it is an idea I've been exploring whilst in quarantine. It is in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet however it isn't a conventional sonnet because it isn't about love. This is actually inspired by a previous sonnet I wrote and some the lines for the original have been incorporated into this. The reason why it's called 'A Breslover sonnet' is because it is inspired by the teaching of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, who taught among of things that to get closer to G-d you must be happy. He promoted dancing as a means to spiritual growth as when you dance you can feel pure joy. He is famous for the quote 'It is a great mitzvah (blessing) to always be happy'. This poem expresses the belief that once you understand how to be truly happy with your life, you will feel close to G-d and understand why people have religion. As I once heard a Na Nach (a follower of Rabbi Nachman's teachings) say, 'once people learn to believe in themselves, they will believe in G-d'.

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Acrostic Poem

Corona virus
Our worst nightmare
Virus versus mankind
It's life or death
Defeat is not an option
we must prevail
1 global fight for humanity
9 lines in this poem
COVID-19

The Daily Exercise Haiku

Now that I'm outdoors
I know I must make this count
This is my one chance

A limerick concerning my lunch

In my fridge I have a pasta bake
It's all that I know how to make
I ate it yesterday
And again today
I'm not sure how much I can take.

My GCSEs - a villanelle

These subjects mean nothing to me
I can barely remember my school
And my life was that GCSE

I could taste my victory
With essays and quotes I would rule
These subjects mean nothing to me

'I hate Hell, all Montagues and thee'
Revision notes were my tool
And my life was that GCSE

I spent hours in chemistry
Was it a watt or a joule?
These subjects mean nothing to me

And now there is no guarantee
Really it seems rather cruel
And my life was that GCSE

They said those exams were key
But now I feel like a fool
These subjects mean nothing to me
And my life was that GCSE

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The Eternal King

I am the king
The ruler of everyone and everything
No animal can do what I can
I am the king; I am man.

I am the king
Hear my subjects sing
I have built societies from soil and raindrops
I am the king; I am on top.

I am the king
See the destruction I bring
I am more than just a sickness
I am the king; I am the Coronavirus

I am the king
You're all suffering
In quarantine - you're all at your worst
I am the king; I come first.

I am the king
They're all just acting
I am your LORD, the creator of all
I am the king; I will never fall.

I am the king
You might want to start praying
Next to me there is none. You live under my wing,
I am the king; you are nothing.

I am the Eternal King; you are nothing.

I don't want to be at home

I don't want to be at home
No, I don't mind being alone
But I feel the urge to roam
And go out into the unknown

I don't want to be at home
I'd happily go to Rome
I'm really trying not to moan
I don't want to be at home

I don't want to be at home
I'd travel on my own
I don't want to be at home
I don't want to be at home

I don't want to be at home
I don't want to be at home
I don't want to be at home
I don't want to be at home

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A Breslover Sonnet

What kind of power do we have on Earth?
Is it human will or a Divine choice?
When you search for your purpose and your worth,
Do you remember the need to rejoice?

Do you know bliss, or do you sit and fret-
Without jubilation; the soul despairs.
We get lost in the dogma- we forget
There's more than just blind faith to daily prayers.

Is it necessary for our survival?
Do we need religion now? Happiness
Comes not from Torah, Qu'ran or Bible,
But from something higher, and nothing less.

Allow true joy, and let your spirit soar,
Then you will find what religion is for.