

MUTE

A collaborative book penned by Transition Year Students from Co. Donegal.

“The idea is to write so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart.”

Maya Angelou

We all know that we are in the most unusual of times. We all have experienced the sweep of emotions since March 2020. It can be difficult to put into words the feelings of loss, missing, confusion, weariness, joys, learning, and unexpected moments of gratitude. It must be even more difficult for classes when working from home and not in the classroom environment. These TY students and their teachers welcomed this challenge.

The students have had the courage to write about their experiences with great clarity. To read through each piece of writing in this booklet is to feel each student’s thoughts and words slide straight to the heart.

I am grateful to Rita Chapman, Donegal County Library, for her support in this project. I am grateful to each student, to their teachers, and their schools for taking on this virtual Creative Writing workshop and making it a success. The students’ thoughts are here; read through it all, dip in and out when you need sustenance, and keep this booklet as a reminder of the feelings of positivity that held strong during the strangest of times. It is a booklet to treasure.

Facilitator

Denise Blake

Mute-Unmute

A collaborative book penned by Transition Year Students
from Co. Donegal.

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online project for their TY classes – for their encouragement and
support to the students and to me as the facilitator.

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Réamhra

Fáilte go ‘Mute-Unmute’, leabhar comhoibritheach a scríobh Daltaí Idirbhliana as Co. Dhún na nGall.

Bhí tionchar mór ag Covid-19 ar shaol achán duine againn, agus go háirithe ar shaol daoine óga. Cuireann leabharlanna, na healaíona, oidhreacht, cultúr agus cruthaitheacht de gach cineál go mór lenár gcaighdeán beatha.

Bhí an tSeirbhís Leabharlainne ag iarraidh deis a thabhairt do dhaoine óga, trí scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach, a gcuid smaointe agus mothúcháin a chomhroinnt le linn na paindéime. Tá súil againn gur bhain siad taitneamh as an tsaothar iontach seo a chruthú, agus tá súil againn go mbainfidh tú féin taitneamh as é a léamh, a gcuid guthanna a chluinstin, agus machnamh a dhéanamh ar a gcuid scéalta. Ba mhaith liom na daoine óga a ghlac páirt a spreagadh chun coinneáil leis an scríbhneoireacht agus bhur nguth ar leith a léiriú.

Ba í Denise Blake, údar, file agus éascaitheoir scríbhneoireachta cruthaithí a spreag an leabhrán seo agus a chuir eagar air.

Táimid ag tnúth le fáilte a chur romhat ar ais chuig na leabharlanna agus chuig na hionaid chultúrtha s’againne mar chuid de Phlean Teacht Aniar agus Téarnaimh an Rialtais. Leis an eolas is deireanaí ar Sheirbhísí Leabharlainne a fháil féach ar www.donegallibrary.ie

Lean ort ag cloí leis na treoirínte sláinte poiblí, le do thoil, agus coinnigh slán sábháilte.

Leabharlannaí Contae agus Bainisteoir Rannáin Cultúir
Eileen Burgess

Is iad Ciste Teacht Aniar an Phobail, An Feachtas chun Coinneáil Slán, agus Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall a chuidigh leis an leabhar seo a chur i gcrích.

Foreword

Welcome to 'Mute-Unmute', a collaborative book penned by Transition Year Students from Co. Donegal.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on all of our lives, and in particular on young people. Libraries, arts, heritage, culture and creativity in all its forms, hugely contribute to our quality of life.

The Library Service wanted to offer young people, through creative writing, a space to share their thoughts and feelings during the pandemic. We hope that they have enjoyed creating this impressive body of work. We hope you enjoy reading it, hearing their voices, and reflecting on their stories. I would like to encourage the young people involved to keep writing and keep expressing your unique voices.

Denise Blake, author, poet and creative writing facilitator was the inspiration and editor of this booklet.

We look forward to welcoming you back to our libraries and cultural buildings as part of the Government's Resilience and Recovery Plan. For the latest information on Library Services see www.donegallibrary.ie

Please continue to follow public health guidelines, stay safe and #KeepWell.

County Librarian and Culture Division Manager
Eileen Burgess

This book was brought to you with the support of the Community Resilience Fund Keep Well Campaign and Donegal County Council.

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Elliot Thompson

I Miss

I miss the times,

I miss the times when I could go to the beach

I miss the times when I could play football with my friends

I miss the times where I could go anywhere I wanted

I miss the times when I could see my friends and family

I will cherish the moments

I will cherish the moments when we don't have to distance

I will cherish the moments when we can stop wearing masks

I will cherish the moments when people don't have to quarantine

I will cherish the moments when Covid is gone forever

I can't wait

I can't wait to go pier jumping

I can't wait to play football with friends

I can't wait to talk to people

I can't wait until Covid is no more

Liam McDermott

A New Dawn

A new dawn is here whether we like it or not.

2020 hit us hard without warning, people running around in fear
(or looking for toilet paper).

Some true sides in us come out to show the game plan is survival.

With this new dawn a new normal is now a possibility with the
masks and cleaning, until there is nothing left to clean it with.

A time when the internet is our saviour.

A life where we can no longer take things for granted.

A world where we miss our former miserable selves.

Kane Harkin

Dear Brock

I wish I could go back,
back to those times.
When nothing really mattered,
when we were carefree, nothing but smiles.

I miss the small talks.
You'd just sit and listen
and when you chased the other terriers,
we thought you had gone missing.

However, here we sit
Waiting on the clock.
As many pats and cuddles
for our boy Brock.

I burst into tears,
people turn their heads,
and turn the cheek.
As I emerge from the clinic,
with a lonesome collar and a leash.

Jeesan Fokrul

Forgetting all the memories.

Remembering all the calamities.

Important I was to you

Everlasting was our friendship,
now you have me feeling blue.

Now I am feeling nostalgic.

Don't go away for a silly argue.

So maybe this friendship was toxic.

U
N
D
E
R
W
A
T
E
R

David Cullen

To me

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
We are all stuck inside,
And have nothing to do.

Kayla Aiken

I like the snow because of how pretty it is.

I like going to the beach,

Feeling the soft sand on my feet

The fresh smell of salt water.

I like the crunch of toast

And the taste of the warm butter

Melting in my mouth

I appreciate my good health

I love my family and friends

I miss my cousins and friends

Rosie Cairns

What I like:

I like the blanket that's keeping me warm

I like tea

I like the snow

I like fake tan

I like Summer because it is warm

More details

I like fake tan as it makes me lovely and brown

However, I don't like the smell.

I like late Summer nights,

As I like the cool breeze

And walks on the soft sand on the beach

And the smell of the bonfire,

The heat off it.

What really matters

My family and friends

My health

The moment that I realised that Corona Virus was serious stuff was when our class was called out during our Science lesson in school and we were ordered to the Sport's Hall. The hallways were very silent and Mrs O'Connor, our principal, came in and told us we were off school due to two weeks due to Covid-19.

I haven't been able to go home to Scotland and see my family.

I have been able to see my friends.

I haven't been able to have my B-day.

I have been able to go to Downings beach.

I haven't been able to go to the Pulse.

Soon I will get to visit my family in Scotland.

Soon I will get a sleepover with my BFF.

Soon I will get my hair done.

Soon I will go on holidays.

Soon I will go out to the Pulse.

Soon I will go back to work.

Soon I will enjoy Summer.

Adam Campbell

I like

Football
Breakfast
Dinner
Outside
Playstation
Working out
Christmas
My friends
My family

I don't like

School
Waking up early
Man United
Liverpool
Chores
Arsenal
Lockdown

I like football as it is a break from the likes of school and work. I enjoy kicking the ball, seeing the way the ball spins and curves. The sound of the ball hitting off my foot onto the wall. I find it relaxes me and takes by mind off things.

I enjoy eating breakfast and dinner as it is the time my family and I are all together as we are always busy; me and my brother with school work; my Dad with work and Mum with work too. I also really like the taste of toast with butter all over it and the sound as you bite into it. Dinner, I enjoy the meat and vegetables with hot gravy over the meat to make it even more delicious.

It all started when we were pulled out of class for an assembly with Ms O'Connor. She told us that school would be closing for two weeks and for us to get everything out of our lockers. It was Ms O'Connor, Mr Scott, and our year head Ms Ward all standing there, saying that they didn't know what really was going to happen or what was the future ahead. For me, myself, I wasn't sure if it would come to us as we are quite far away, nearly in my head we were safe from all this Covid stuff. But clearly, I misjudged the situation as I didn't take it as serious as I thought. Look where we are now – it is Lockdown 2.

I haven't gone to watch a game in real life for a long time whether it is Milford Seniors or Finn Harps Seniors. The noise a ball makes as it is being struck. The noise of the crowd on the sideline. The noise of the players and coaches. The tea at halftime where it would be warm and cosy compared to the windy, wet, cold outside. Me, my Dad and my brother would come together during those games.

Whenever lockdown is over, I want to go and meet my friends who I haven't spoken to in a while. The same with my family as we haven't all met in a while. So hopefully, soon, that will happen.

Jane Curley

Themes of Happiness

Breakfast: Toasted and cooled, Dip of the knife on toast with butter and jam,

Orange juice

Music: The sound, the picture it creates, the small ding of the piano

Art: The bright colours, the sound of the brush against the paper, the dip of the brush, the pencil lead stretching the paper

Summertime: Warm feeling, the grass, the clouds, the sun rising, busy estate, cool air

Games: Starting my computer up, clicking the keyboard, the bright screen glows, the controller clicking

Animals: Stroking their fur

Creative Writing

Opening my eyes to bright sunrise, I squint out the window and feel the warm summer air bounce off my face. The fresh Irish air fills my lungs as I take my first step outside. The grass under my feet feels soft. I can smell barbecue with the sizzling sausages grilling. Pouring coke into a cool glass, the water dripping down the side with the hot air. Popping out the annual sunchair on the lawn, putting my feet with my sunglasses on. Summer is my favourite thing in the world.

I Have

During the time I've had, I've developed as a person. I focused on myself and my personality, building my traits and becoming the person I want to be in the future. The free time gives me time to reflect and evaluate myself. I distanced myself from

people who were bad for me and got new friends. It was a relief to turn over a new leaf and get rid of the toxicity. I have had more time to focus on my family and real friends' relationships. It helps to have them around all the time. Having piles of free time also made me feel more relaxed and happy. I don't feel guilty about it as I currently don't have any responsibilities. Avoiding the daily commute is also a great advantage of being in lockdown.

I've been walking outside more often, appreciating nature and actually enjoying my surroundings. I never had the time to look at these things previously.

I Haven't

This year, I have not had the full TY experience whatsoever. It has been hard that I couldn't enjoy the luxuries of the year and it disappoints me that I've missed out on so much. Trips cancelled, stuck in the house and seeing no one is really difficult mentally. Not seeing anyone really got to me during the beginning of lockdown, it still does. I miss social interactions and communicating with people. I haven't had much experience of that this year. I haven't been able to travel anywhere, as we usually would visit a country annually. I love travelling and it was upsetting to miss out.

I also have been mentally feeling down, since I'm anxious about catching COVID.

I miss going out for food, it was an enjoyable experience and it was social. There has been many opportunities lost to the pandemic.

Things I appreciate

I appreciated writing, music and art during the hard times with Covid 19.

Whenever I feel sad, I open my drawing program, write or play music to relax myself.

After Lockdown ends... ..

I want to finally experience things that have been limited to me, such as seeing family/friends. Eating food out and being able to openly move around would be a relief.

I would definitely be less worried and more happy if Covid-19 ended, so I feel my emotions would improve. When it ends, it'll finally feel like freedom. I won't have to worry about social distancing, masks, etc. It will just be like how it was before, everyone talking and having fun. I miss those times greatly and I can't wait for them to return.

Cormac Atkinson

Football

I enjoy going outside with my friends to the pitch on a nice, sunny, crisp day to play football.

When being there, just talking to your friends while playing a sport I love, is probably my favourite thing.

Listening to one of the boys hit a belter top right is just the most satisfying thing.

Demi Dunworth

I Love...

I love big, baggy warm jumpers that go down to my knees
and the autumn weather and the changing colour
of the leaves

I love listening to music and hot cups of tea

I love staying up to all hours of the night
waking up the next morning is always a fight

I love the first look at a snowy morning

I love cool summer evenings with my friends listening
to music and laughing

I love the sound of rain while I'm in my warm bed

I love cheering someone up who is having a bad day

I love getting a new outfit and putting it on straight away

I love the warm fire after coming inside freezing cold

I probably should've worn a coat, or so I'm told

I love spending time with someone and forgetting
my problems

and hopefully making them forget theirs too

And remembering that within all the bad stuff in the world
there's so much to love too

Ben Fox

I like

Being outside
Watching and playing sports
Summer and Winter
Animals
Playing Playstation
Cups of tea
Seeing my friends
Seeing my grandparents
Farming

I don't like

Lockdown
Photography class
Spicy foods
Gymnastics

I like the Springtime because I love seeing the lambs and calves being born. And when they are running up and down the field until they get tired and need a rest.

I like playing football because I am good at it and it also gets you fitter when playing it.

I realise that I now know how much I mean to my grandparents. How much they miss me helping them with small jobs. And how I can't wait to get back into their surroundings.

Kyrah McFadden

I like

My coffee
my phone
my bed, tea, tv,
my dogs
when you're pouring milk the taste of it!
Talking to my friends

I don't like

my alarm in the morning
I don't like lockdown

Covid Realisation

When I got called down to the canteen and we were told that we were going home at 4:00 and to empty our lockers.

I remember looking at my friend with the biggest smile. I was so happy. I remember going to get black bags and waiting to get into the lockers. We were so excited.

I texted my Mum, "school closed".

She typed, "Kyrah, I have to close my business." That day was Mum's first day open. She had only one day open.

I remember reading the text. I felt so bad and I started to worry. It hit me that this was serious, that Mum was upset, and I was jumping about with excitement.

I started worrying about Grandad.

Ruth McFadden

When I realised Covid was a problem....

I think I realised it was a big problem when we were told that we were not going to be in school anymore. We were called into the gym and talked to by our year head. We were told to empty our lockers because they were uncertain of when we would be back. We got black bags from the school and filled them with books. We left that day for the start of the first lockdown.

I haven't

Been on a school trip in over a year

Seen my family from abroad

Gone on a shopping trip

I have

Spent more time with close family

Spent more time with pets.

Helped out around the house

When this is over ...

I want to go out for a proper shop, clothes shopping and eating again with my parents and grandparents.

I want to go to the cinema and eat popcorn.

I want to go back to horse riding and go back to working at the ISPCA.

I want to have fun with my friends and give them big hugs.

What matters to me now

During the quarantine, I have learned what is most important to me. It shocked me how much I hadn't been appreciating them. My pets have kept me sane over quarantine. I can always count on one of the cats to be a cuddle buddy or for the donkeys to be around to feed. I've been able to spend more quality time with everyone and was able to be around for one of my pet's demises. It's something that I had never thought would happen but, unfortunately, it did.

My animals are so important to me, I don't think I could imagine life without them. The quarantine would have been way worse if they hadn't been here. I can take a break, go outside and see them and get a wee bit of fresh air. Once the weather gets better, I can go outside and just sit for a while. I can watch the donkeys and cuddle with the cats. I can go down to the river and have a walk if I want once it heats up. I can open the window and listen to the birds sing.

I'm so lucky to live in the middle of nowhere, I can literally go and walk anywhere I want to without a mask. I meet no one when I walk, save for the herons that hunt here and the deer that visit. I have had opportunities that I never had before. My family and I helped save not only a bat but a bird as well. We never would have seen these things if we weren't working from home. I have seen animals around here that I've never seen for ages; just the other day, I saw what I think was a family of buzzards circling above my house!

In short I have found that I should appreciate my surroundings a lot more than I have been. The wildlife around us is plentiful and wonderful. As I speak, there are tadpoles and frogs swimming in the sioch. We need to take some time out of our lives to appreciate the wonders of nature and our pets.

Róisín Sweeney

I like:

Singing

Playing guitar

Going on walks in the morning

Freshly cut grass

Playing with my dog

Meeting up with my friends

Visiting my granny

Baking

Reading

Looking after my sheep, driving the tractor

Being busy

Running in the rain

I don't like:

When snow turns to ice

Being stuck at home everyday

When my alarm doesn't go off in the morning

Cycling

Rolling back the silage pit

When I have to make dinner

Not being able to go on holidays



I love:

Newborn lambs

Listening to music

Summer mornings

The feeling of Christmas

The satisfaction of completing something I worked hard at

What I love more because of lockdown:

Porridge

Exercise

Spending time with my family

Being outside

Visiting my grandparents in Kildare

Going out for lunch

Online shopping

I like early mornings and having a productive day. I like going on walks when everyone else is still asleep. I like spending more time with my dog and teaching him to fetch. I like looking after the sheep and helping them when they're having their lambs. I like visiting my granny; she lives just down the road and I visit her every morning and evening when I feed the sheep at her house. I like driving the tractor because it's a bit of freedom during a time when we can't go anywhere. I like listening to the rain and the wind at night in my bed as I find it very relaxing.

Soon I will be able to go to the cinema and go shopping with my friends. Soon I will be able to stay at my granny's house without having to social distance and isolate myself before I stay with her. Soon I will go to Kildare to see my mum's family. Soon I will hug my friends and family without being afraid of giving them Covid. Soon I will be able to cough in public without feeling guilty and ashamed and thinking that people think I have a highly contractable and dangerous virus. Soon I will be able to go on foreign holidays.

Soon I will go back to school with no masks, sanitisers and social distancing. Soon I will be able to go shopping in Letterkenny. Soon I will be able to get dressed and go to concerts and festivals. Soon I will be able to get my hair done.

A Lockdown Day '21

My mother is hoovering and cleaning downstairs.

My brother is helping my uncle build his house where our family has lived for generations.

My granny is watching mass online and baking bread or gardening.

My sister is at school; she is the only one of us back at school.

My dad is in Cavan working for the Department of Agriculture.

The farmers in my locality are looking after their animals, spreading slurry, fencing and making sure all the newborn lambs and calves are all doing well.

The main road is busy with cars rushing to work to beat the traffic.

If I saw my March 2020 self;

I would tell her not to get her hopes up about the trip to Italy, because she won't be going. I would tell her to appreciate the simple things, like having lunch in the canteen at a crowded table, sitting beside her friends in class, staying over at her granny's house, going out for Sunday dinner, going to Penneys and meeting up with friends. I would tell her not to study for the Junior Cert because it won't be going ahead.

Eddie Talbot

Like

Drawing – the feeling of drawing and how it looks

Video games – the tactile feeling

Comics – visual

Podcast – noise

Being Trans – visual, noise

Art – visual

Dislike

School – noise, visual

Loud noises

Videos without subtitles

Conor Neely

I Like

I like soccer

I like GAA

I like Donegal

I like the Summertime

I like soccer – playing with your friends on a nice, sunny day

I was sitting, watching television with my family about Covid when I realised that this is going to be a big change in our lives. At first, I thought it was nothing, but it got serious.

Noah Martin

I was in the school gym when we were called for an announcement. We were told that we would be getting a week or two off school because of Covid. None of realised that we wouldn't have the Junior Cert and we wouldn't be back in at all.

I haven't played a game of basketball in nearly a year

I have been able to do work from home

I haven't been able to go to team trials

I haven't been able to go to the Pulse

I haven't been able to meet all of my friends in ages

When this is over I will play team basketball again

Soon I will be able to meet my friends again

Mae McCarron

I think it was when I went to Tesco's for the first time during lockdown and there was a long queue out the door to get in. We all had to stand 2m apart from each other and wear masks. There was a man standing at the entrance to tell us when it would be ok to get in. We had to spray down the trolley and sanitise our hands.

I haven't – I have

I haven't spent much time with my friends

I have made new friends

I haven't gone to the cinema

I have watched Netflix and Disney +

I have spent more time with my family

I haven't seen my cousins and aunties and uncles

I haven't been on a plane

I have been on my bike

I haven't been to guitar lessons

I have been practising in my room

I haven't been to training

I have been playing in the garden

Michelle McFadden

I realised our world had changed, would change, is changed when Ireland closed down the schools. I was in my Business class when it was announced and a few hours later the discos were shut for the next day. Not long after that everything was closed down except the essential businesses and hospitals. The streets were like a ghost town. Last March 2020 is when the pandemic changed our lives.

I have been lucky enough to be able to get my hair done as my Mammy is a hairdresser

I haven't got to the Pulse for our last teeny bopper, to be dancing to our favourite music with my friends

I have got to go to the beach and on nature walks more often to play in the cold water with the wind blowing in my hair

When this is over I will be able to go back to school and see my friends.

Soon I will be able to camp on the beach again in the summer, watching the sun go down with my friends playing music.

When this is over I'll be able to go on holidays. I've missed them so much with the smell of the warm air to hit you when you are stepping off the plane.

Emma Peoples

When the announcement came out I was sitting in English class as the teacher looked up the news. I was happy when the school was closing. But then I worried because I was frightened in case my granny and grandad got it.

I have not been able to get my hair dyed

I have been able to go walking

I have not been able to go to school

I have been able to look after my sheep

When this is over I will be able to go see my friends

When this is over I will be able to go shopping

When this is over I will be able to go out for dinner with people

When this is over I will be able to go to the mart

Thoughts from a Student

The moment I realised this was real

It was the middle of a regular school day. We had a free Geography class and the substitute teacher let us go on our phones. Everyone started seeing news that the schools might be closing so the room was filled with chatter. The sub teacher decided to put us out of our misery and confirmed that he had received an email from our principal saying that our school would be closing. Everyone was so excited and the room was filled with hectic energy. Then an announcement came on the intercom that said our school would be closed. It was cool to know that our class had found out before everyone else did. It didn't really sink in however until the hallways were frantic and chaotic as they were filled with excited students. We had to put all our books from our lockers into black bags! It was surreal. A moment I won't forget.

I Haven't – I Have

I haven't been able to hang out with friends but

I have been able to spend more time with my family

I haven't been able to go to the cinema but

I have been able to watch movies in front of the fire with loved ones

I haven't been to school but

I have experienced a new way of learning

I haven't been able to visit loved ones, older family members, weekly visits to grandparents but

I have been able to teach them how to use technology to keep in touch



Soon I Will

Soon I will meet up with friends.

Soon I will be able to hug freely.

Soon I will go out and feel
the hustle and bustle around me.

Soon I will go to a club
and dance all night.

Soon being close to others
will be alright.

Soon we will have freedom
and time will stand still
as we remember how we used to say,
“Soon we will.”

2020 Vision

I would advise myself to not sweat the small stuff; it will seem irrelevant in a year's time. Don't stress about the Junior Cert – you won't have to sit any exams!

I would advise myself to enjoy the freedom you have. Go out, enjoy yourself, socialise, spend time with loved ones; friends, family. Make the most of your freedom: you don't know how valuable it is until you've lost it.

Lockdown

Parents home schooling their children.

Children learning at home.

Farmers harvesting the fields.

Doctors and nurses saving lives, risking their own.

Teachers working from home.

Priests live-streaming mass.

People separating from each other.

Tamara Blaney

I realised how serious COVID 19 was when I was in school on the 12 of March. Each year had been called to the sports hall for an assembly. Not one of us had any idea on what was going to happen in the near future. We were told to completely empty everything out of our lockers and get ready to take it home as we didn't know when we would be back at school.

I realised how serious COVID 19 was when the first announcement was made on 24 March by Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar. He told us that all businesses, venues, facilities and amenities which shut down and only gatherings of four people were allowed. Three days later, on 27 March, the government imposed a stay-at-home order, banning all non-essential travel and contact with people outside one's home, including family and partners. The elderly and those with certain health conditions were told to cocoon. People were made to keep apart in public. The Garda Síochána were given power to enforce the measures, which were repeatedly extended until 18 May.

Cormac Brady

I started taking COVID seriously when I heard a few of the students had to self-isolate when they were coming back from that skiing trip. We heard that they had to self-isolate when we got on the bus me and my friend. At the time we self-isolating was far scarier than it actually is.

I haven't been abroad

I have found a new place to walk in Ballyare Woods.

I haven't been to an arcade to have fun.

I have been to a football pitch.

I haven't been on any form of public transport.

I have started to cycle a lot more.

I haven't played in a match in a long time.

I have started to train more by myself.

Soon I will go to the barber and get rid of my long hair.

Soon I will play in another football game

Soon I will be able to sit in at a restaurant.

Ronan McGinley

A Day in My Life

My confirmation was a momentous day. I woke up early to get ready. My Granny and Grandad were staying at the house at the time. I could hear them chatting and the sound of saucepans clanging and clattering together. The tap was running and people were running around the house. The atmosphere was intense and also exciting at the same time.

I could smell a fry cooking so I quickly got changed and put on my school uniform. Eventually we all got rounded up and we were ready to go. We just needed to take a couple of pictures before we left and then we were ready to go.

The confirmation was at Kilmacrennan Church. My classmates and I were all seated at the top right with our sponsors directly across from us on the left. We all had instruments with us and we played a few songs. I also did a reading at the mass.

After it was over, we walked over to the school and had snacks and took pictures. We then drove home and had dinner provided by a catering company.

Ellie Duffy

Everything

Everything has changed
The days go into nights
As quickly as water goes down a drain

We miss our friends
We miss our family
We miss the simple things
The things we took for granted

We never thought about those things
It never crossed our minds
But now we can't do those things
Doing nothing has changed everything

Niamh Toland

Gathered in the sitting room anxiously waiting for bad news to arrive.

The Taoiseach tells us these are unprecedented times. Schools are closing for a few weeks.

But that is exciting at first.

St Patrick's Day is cancelled all across Ireland.

No disco in the Pulse.

England think we are all madmen.

They don't take action quick enough.

That was the beginning of 2020.

I didn't know what was ahead of me.

It's 2021 now. February. I'm tired of this year already.

Thomas Canon

When this is over

I will never take the little things for granted again.

I will meet my friends, relaxed in the comfort and safety of the past being the past.

If this time has taught me anything it's that the little things are what you miss most; the spontaneous gatherings, the summer's evening games, and the holidays spent with relatives.

When this is over, I will visit my grandparents again. Mask free, and not feeling anxious or nervous. Just quality time.

When this is over, I will enjoy a haircut like nobody has before. Once again, a small detail but a significant loss when it is taken away.

When this is over, I will marvel at our collective resilience and our strength.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Matthew Callaghan

What sports did for me

The wind is in your hair
as you ride down to the pitch.
As you come to the junction for
your second home, you wave
at the parents and kids who've
just finished training.
Oh, you remember the fun of U10s.

On your arrival you listen to the
conversation of the man in the Mayo jersey.
You fondly reminisce at the memory of
the heated debate over the likelihood
of the Westerners making it to the All-Ireland.
You told him Mayo were the worst team
in Connacht, just to rise a reaction. It worked.

Training has begun and you hear whistles,
shouting and cursing.
You don't complain because you're the main culprit.
Ah yes, how those lads will develop under your watch
has worried you but you remember,
Sports will give them hope,
just like what Sports did for you.

Caolan Northage

I Call this Day

I call this day gratitude,
as I listen to the song
of the birds singing from high altitude.
I hear the ring of the church bells,
the morning filled with Spring air.
Who am I to care,
it is all for us to share.

Jenny McGettigan

The Little Moments

Empty lockers and halls with overflowing
binbags full of lightly used books.
See you in two weeks they said ...
Confusion and uncertainty across everyone's faces.
Months passed and cases dramatically grew.
Birthdays came and went.
Time passed by but we will continue to wait ...
Night ran into day, the new normal.
Soon it will all be a memory and we will
appreciate the little things more than ever.

Evan Keown

When Covid first came to Ireland, there were one and two cases a day. It was very scary at the time because we had seen what was happening to countries like China and Italy. It was extremely bad and terrifying at the time. On that year we were meant to go to Lake Garda on a third year's trip. So we were like, "will we be going, or will we not?" We couldn't really tell how bad it was so we thought we might have got. Unfortunately, we didn't.

I remember it so well. On March the 12th in English class with Mr Lonergan, we got an announcement saying we were going on a two week lockdown. Most of our school was excited and chuffed but we did not actually realise what was ahead.

I Have Not – I Have

I have not played football or a Gaelic match in the bright summer's sky and warm weather in the Burn Road.

The feeling of excitement for the upcoming championship.

I have got to go on cycles, explore different roads, go to different cliffs and water etc.

I haven't got to go abroad on a holiday in the beautiful heat, getting burnt and sweating like a pig, touring different towns, buildings, beaches. I have taken up golf as a sport.

There is nothing better than going to Portsalon.

Fintan Sheehy

The Little Moments

Train station is crowded with the hustle and bustle of people going from point A to point B. I disembark the streamline train into a wide open housing. My field of vision is blurred by the daily commuters. They walk soullessly around bringing their luggage and bags and other belongings with them on their path. One complains how they lost a bag, a small child cries for attention. How these problems will seem so stupid to them in the future.

I snake my way past the hoards of busy people but suddenly a Déjà Vu clouds around me as I gaze at the figure so distinct, so familiar it stops me in my tracks. My past shadow sits near a whitewashed wall listening to music as waits for his train. At first, I wanted to warn him. Warn him of an invisible threat that soon shall plague our land. How we shall all be locked up in our homes and how meeting with friends and family is shamed upon. How each day the news calls out the number of the victims and how everyone's life could change because of one wrong breath. But sooner or later this will all come too normal.

I begin to approach my past self but I soon release the fear I am about to inflict upon him. So instead I smile and walk the other way.

The Summers sun shines down high from above, acting as a beacon of light it guides me as I traverse the deep murky blue waters low below.

The cold water rocks my small boat, like a cradle moving in a back and forth motion. But with the wind at my back and my sails fully lowered no force could reckon with my devotion. To the sea of salt and monstrous waves the wind guides me on my path each of Summers days.

Here it is I can feel my full potential, as I glide over the waves like a gull, I feel truly special. The roaring ocean and cries of the seas are now only distant echoes for me. And I pray each day for these days once more and seek the feeling for a sandy floor.

Patrick McDaid

When it's Over

When it's over

When all the dust has settled

When it's all a distant memory

I will go and continue where I left off

I must not dwell on time lost

For what has happened has happened

I must do the things I long to do

When it's over

Through the Window

Through the Window

It was like a sunny morning in the middle of July,
I was sitting in front of the window with the sun beaming
down on my notebook.

The sounds around me were so peaceful and calm.
It was the sound of birds chirping and newborn lambs
playing in the field next door.

I felt at peace, as if all my troubles and worries had just
disappeared.

Although the branches on the trees were still completely
bare, you could tell summer was on its way.

Pranav Prabhakar

Nature

I like strolling through a windy path in the woods. I like the sounds of birds singing, leaves on the branches of the trees brushing and the sound of twigs and dry leaves crunching.

I like the smell of the moist woodland air as it fills my lungs, and placing my hand on the rough, yet soft, trunk of a tree.

I like walking along a beach, on a warm sunny day, where all I can see above me is the endless expanse of blue sky.

I like watching waves from the sea crawling gently up the shore, bringing hidden treasures of seashells and brightly coloured stones.

I enjoy the taste of the salty air carried by the breeze and the warm touch of the sun on my face.

I like the sound of rain going pitter patter and watching each drop ripple as it lands in a puddle.

I like the shape, each step of my feet leaves, on freshly fallen snow.

I like everything about nature and the seasons, more than ever before.

Alanna Lockhart

If You Had Asked Me

If you had asked me this time last year, “what is a global pandemic?” I wouldn’t have been able to answer your question, never mind think that I would be stuck in my house for a year.

Like everything in life, there comes ups and downs.

The warm summer days glorified us, but the long winters terrorised us.

I had to put my life on stand still, while others put their lives on the line.

I walked the months away on the narrow country roads,

and I learnt an appreciation for the beautiful countryside of Ramelton I live in.

The bright green fields, the cows munching on grass and the birds chirping on the crisp spring mornings was something I learnt to love.

Stuck at home, I got to learn things about myself I wouldn’t have known otherwise.

I love baking, even when my head is aching! I learnt I need people.

I learnt an appreciation for farming, which is something I never thought I’d be able to say I liked. Lockdown was great.

But then came the dark mornings, dark evenings and the short days. All motivation got lost and it felt as if there was nothing left and it would never end.

Summer is just around the corner and I have never been happier

Kiera Doherty

A Day in the Life of Me

My everyday area

My pink and white bedroom with the view of my garden and Illistrin.
Surrounding myself with my parents and siblings with the sounds of singing birds and speeding vehicles.

Within my 5 km area

Keelins house, Letterkenny, Kilmacrennan, our Uncle's house

Further than 5km

Creeslough, Granny Sweeney's house, and Grandad Doherty's house,
Michelle's house, Johnny's house

The World and the news

Relatives in Uppsala, Sweden
Ireland's vaccine program lags behind the UK.

Adam Cullen

I love music because it makes me happy

I love the ocean. I like swimming

I don't like smoke

I like tea

I like animals

I don't like public speaking

I love my bed because it is comfortable

I don't like waking before 9 o'clock

I have not played football

I have drunk a lot of tea

I have not left Donegal

I have learned the guitar

I have not been to a disco

I have done more school work

Soon I will play football

Soon I will go on holiday

Soon I will go to a disco

Soon I will go back to work

Soon I will go to the cinema

Ciara Chernick

I like sleeping in

I like to paint I like to bake

I like the smell of mint

I don't like the smell of coconut

I like walking alone on the beach

I like the sound of rain from my bedroom

I don't like sports

I don't like scary movies

I love the autumn because the leaves turn orange and red

I love my friends

I miss being with my friends

I miss school trips

I miss going shopping

I miss not having to order everything online

I miss my friend's little sisters

I miss making memories

I have not been able to go out as much

I have picked up new hobbies like crocheting

I have not seen my best friend in 8 months

I have missed her

I have not seen my cousins in over a year

I have missed them

I have not had the full TY experience

I have made the most of TY

I have not liked being in lockdown

I have hope that things will get better soon.

When this is over

I will see my friends again
I will see my family again
I will make more memories
I will go shopping
I will go to the cinema
I will eat in a restaurant
I will visit my family in America

In a Day...

I'm talking to my friends
Teachers are on their break chatting among themselves
A grandmother sits in her chair knitting
A pilot lands a plane in France
A waiter spills a cup of tea
A lifeguard falls in a pool
A hairdresser reaches for a straightener
A boy calls for his dog
A baby cries for her mother

Talking to my past self

I would tell my past self to stop studying for the Junior Cert,
it's not going to happen.
I would warn myself of the upcoming pandemic.
I would tell myself to savour any moments of normality
because they are fleeting.

Emily Irwin

I love walks and being outside with my family, things I had before but have way more of now.

I miss my friends and going out to discos and socialising with them.

I love having the time to sit and watch tv or a movie, not something I got to do often.

But I also miss not having the time to do that. I miss being on the go 24/7: going from school, back home, to shove my dinner into me, before rushing out the door and complaining to my Mum that I'm going to be late for training. Then coming home after training to get a shower, do homework, go to bed, and repeat again every day.

I love cooking and shopping online: things I only discovered I love doing during lockdown.

I miss the feeling of walking into the gym and seeing my basketball team shooting baskets before we start training.

The moment that hit me most at first about the Corona virus was the night before schools closed on March 14th. I had told myself and believed that school or nowhere else was going to close.

But the night before the schools closed, I got word that my basketball season was cancelled. Our team had won all of our games so far and the only games that we had left to play was 4 finals and then the All- Ireland championship.

When I hear of this news my body was full of so many emotions like fear, anger, sadness. And when the schools closed the next day, I knew it was going to be awhile before things would be back to normal.

I haven't got to travel

I have spent more time with my family

I haven't played sport a lot

I have learnt more about other activities that I like doing

I haven't been socialising with my friends

I have learnt that a walk can be the best way to see people

I haven't gone on trips with the school

I have gotten closer to people in my class

I have not got to go to concerts

I have realised how much I love concerts and music

When this is over

When this is over I'm going to go on holidays with my family; somewhere warm and sunny

Soon I will get a haircut and go to beaches and out for dinner with my friends over the summer

Soon I will play football with my team again

When this is over I want to go out to a disco/party with lots of people

A day in lockdown

People working

students working from home

Leaving Certs back at school

People walking

People exercises

Families spending time together

People eating

People relaxing

I would tell myself not to stress about the Junior Cert

I would tell myself to give everyone a hug before you leave school for “2 weeks”

I would tell myself to prepare for things to get worse because

it's not going to get better

I would tell myself to appreciate basketball training because you're not going to be there for a while

I would tell myself to keep working hard,
even when I want to give up

Grace Doherty

I like football

I like music

I like chocolate

I like coffee

I like painting

I love Celtic

I love music

I love Summer

I love seeing friends & music & shopping and I miss them

I like watching Youtube

I like clothes

I like the beach

I like being with people

I like concerts

I love family

I love coffee

I love friends

I haven't been shopping

I haven't been to parties

I have been on a bus

I have made online friends

I haven't played football

I haven't seen friends and family

I have got a job

I haven't been to a restaurant

I have been to the beach

I have been on hikes

I have been swimming

I haven't been to the cinema

I haven't been in a café

I haven't been to a disco

I have enjoyed nature

When this is over I will spend time with the people I love.

Soon I will travel.

When this is over I won't be so negative about school.

Soon I will get my hair done.

When this is over I will go to a concert.

Soon I will hug my Granny.

When this is over I will go to a football game.

A day in lockdown

People getting their coffee

People going on their daily walk

People missing their families

People quarantining

I would tell myself

I would tell myself that there is an end (hopefully).

And that I will see my family/friends again and

I will appreciate them even more.

Jodie McFadden


I like Gaelic football. I like to see my friends when I enter the classroom. I like the smell of lavender. I like the smell of newly cut grass in the summer. I love my family. I love the feeling of winning.

I hate the dreaded feeling on a Sunday before school. I hate feeling dirty. I hate knowing I've lost. I hate failing. I hate the taste of burnt foods. I hate the smell of rotten eggs. I hate the sound of things screeching. I hate the fear of water and drowning. I hate Covid-19.

I love Gaelic football because it's my native sport and I love playing for my country. I love the smell of lavender because it's refreshing and a smell from my childhood. I love the smell of newly cut grass because it makes me cherish the small things in life and where I live. I love my family because they are my best friends. I love the feeling of winning because I feel successful.

I hate the dreaded feeling on a Sunday before school because it replays in my mind like a song, not a happy song. I hate knowing I've lost because I didn't do enough to help my team. I hate the taste of burnt foods because my taste buds reject it. I hate the sounds of things screeching because it causes a pain in my ears.

I hate the fear of water and drowning since a young age and an experience that has haunted me. I hate Covid-19 as it stopping me from fulfilling my life with others.



I love hard work more than anything now and will never take it for granted because I would do anything to go through the hard work and pain just to play sports again. I love music as it takes me to a place where I can imagine myself doing things I love. I love technology because, without it, I would have nothing to contact friends or family. I love school because it gives me a chance to communicate every day with others. I love exercise as I get to see progress in myself. I love Ireland as it has made me realise how beautiful our country is.

I realised the Coronavirus was serious whenever the lockdown got extended for another 2 weeks and when all football was called off and the schools closed. I was scared and didn't know what to expect. I didn't know I wouldn't see my friends for so long. I didn't expect to miss the long, hard training sessions that were so painful.

I have not partied, I have not gone out, I have not got my hair done, I have not travelled, I have not seen family members, I have not shopped in shops, I have not met up with friends to talk and have fun, I have not eaten at a restaurant.

I have played football, I have gone on walks, I have cycled, I have gone for runs in the car, I have tried new foods, I have baked, I have done online learning, I have struggled, I have gone to the beach,
I have watched new shows

Soon I will play football, soon I will shop in shops, soon I will hug my friends, soon I will hug family members, soon I will party, soon I will go out, soon I will train with teammates, soon I will go to friends' houses, soon I will have sleepovers, soon I will eat out, soon I will invite friends over, soon I will never wear a mask again, soon I will never worry about Coronavirus.

People are walking. Mothers and fathers are working hard to keep their family healthy and happy. People are struggling. No sports are on, only elite sports. We are locked up. The same days are being repeated . There is no socialisation. People are wearing masks. Humans are dying and becoming ill.

2020 Vision

I would tell myself to never take anything for granted. Cherish more memories. Catch up with friends. Work hard. Don't stress on silly things. Do things that make me happy.

Keelin Byrne

I love going on holidays because I get to have fun with my family

I love football because I get to play with my friends and it is a good laugh

I love movies because they make me laugh

I miss going to Dublin to visit my grandparents

I miss going on holidays and the smell of the beach

I miss going to training and playing with my friends

I have not been able to go to the beach and see the waves

I have started up my own clothing business

I have not been able to see my grandparents in months and feel their arms around me

I have been cycling and working out more

Soon I will be able to get a haircut

Soon I will be able to go to school

Soon I will be able to go to the cinema

I was sitting in my English class, just like every other day and suddenly the intercom turns on. Our principal informs us that the whole school will be closing for two weeks.

The whole school went mental. We were given bin bags so we could clear out our lockers and bring home all our books.

When I got home my Mum was astounded that we were off for two weeks and she was worried about our Junior Cert.

All I could think was, which movie will I watch later.

We then went down to stock up on some essentials but when we got there it was packed to the brim. Most of the shelves were empty. This was when I realised that Covid-19 was deadly.

Kyle Gibson

I like Playstation

I don't like getting up early

I like music

I like shoes

I don't like school

I don't like the cold

I love playing football

I love the warm water

I love sleeping

I love going to the gym

I remember playing for my team.

I remember going to the cinema with my friends.

I remember there being no restrictions.

I remember not having to social distance.

I haven't gone to the gym consistently

I haven't been on holidays

I have not been to mass

I have not seen my Granny

Soon I will play football

Soon I will see Granny

Soon I will go to the gym

Lindzi Callan

I like walking

I like baking

I like my phone

I love meeting friends

I love shopping

I love my dog

I don't like tomatoes

I don't like cleaning

I don't like lettuce

I love my laptop

Sounds

I love music

I love hearing rain

I love hearing thunder

I love hearing singing

Sights

I love the beach

I love mountains

I love sunsets

I love thunder

I love meeting friends. I love listening to music. I love the sunset. I love my phone.

I love hearing thunder. I love walking

Oisín Kelly

I love running because it makes me feel good and keeps me fit.

I love seeing the sun as it makes everyone that bit brighter.

I love the sound of the waves crashing in a storm.

I love trying to run against a gale force wind.

In the last year what do I love even more?

I love being around my family more.

I love focussing on myself that small bit more.

I will love spending time with loved ones as I don't see them much.

I try to make something out of every opportunity.

What moment made you take Covid seriously

I was in Ms Cavanagh's class. She is my history teacher. We were doing our work and the next thing the intercom came on. It announced that schools would be closing for two weeks. I was stunned. I didn't know how to react. Everyone had mixed emotions. I remember looking towards my friends, some looked happy while others looked confused and scared.

I have / I have not

I have not been able to meet my friends and talk to them.

I have not been able to look forward to packing my suitcase and travel abroad.

I have not been able to play Gaelic football with Termon, my local club

I have been able to go for runs and keep myself fit.

I have been able to bond more with my family and spend more time with them.

I have been able to go for walks with my dog and my family.

I have been able to keep in touch with my friends through video games and social media.

Soon I will

Soon I will be able to go to the beach and dive into the ocean.

Soon I will be able to kick a gaelic football with loads of my friends.

Soon I will be able to stop staring at a screen for hours in a day.

Soon I will be able to travel wherever I want without having to worry about Covid.

This is what is happening right now:

A new baby is being born

Someone is teaching a kid how to ride their bike

People are fighting in a war

People are working in over-crowded hospitals

Someone is finding out that they have lost someone

Someone is living their last day of their life right now



2020 Vision

I would tell myself, don't be stressing about the Junior Cert, it isn't going ahead.

I would tell myself to be prepared for a huge change and to spend as much time doing the things you love before you don't get the chance to do it again.

I would tell myself to not panic about Covid 19 and that there will be a vaccine.

I would tell myself what the winning lottery numbers are so that I can win the lottery.

Oran McMenamin

Covid

It took awhile to really grasp what was going on in the world with the global pandemic. I first thought it would be nice to have two weeks off which eventually turned into a few months. It was quite a shock to see what was happening in the world.

I have been for a walk in Termon
I haven't been outside of Donegal in a long time
I have watched lots of Netflix
I haven't been to the cinema
I have eaten my food at home
I have not eaten in a restaurant for some time
I have been at home every day
I have not been to school
I have trained by myself
I have not trained with friends

When this is over I will be able to go back to a normal life; playing football with nothing to hold me back, only an injury or a red card. Meeting friends without fear, travelling free for the first time in a while.

I would tell myself to not be stressing yourself about the future because eventually everything will u-turn around and gradually begin to get back to normal life like 2019.

Rory McGrenra

It was the 12th of March when we were told we would be off school for two weeks. At first, we all thought, we'd be back in the two weeks. However, that wasn't going to happen.

It took me until the second of April to realise, 'this is serious.' My Granny passed away on that day. She was a woman who prayed every day and always had rosary beads in her hand. She also lived literally, a stone's throw away from the chapel. On the day of her funeral there were four cases of Covid in Ireland. The chapel was closed and we as a family had to walk and carry my Granny past the chapel. That is when it hit me, this is serious.

I have not: played football, smelt the wet grass on my gloves and seen the ball fly over the bar

I have: helped my Dad in the garden and made many changes to how it looks and smells

I have not: met my friends at the pitch and had fun. We haven't been able to cycle to the shop and come back with bags of food

I have: been driving cars and getting myself prepared for driving lessons

When this is over:

I will get back to going to Donegal games and meeting people from all over Ireland. The tight games and sore throats are all sadly missed.

When this is over:

I will get back to going to friends' houses and having the craic. When we all meet at someone's house and be there all day and night , sometimes a couple of nights. Normality is all that everyone wants.

Mute

Covid
Viruses
Sickness
Homelessness
Sadness

Unmute

Life
Vaccines
Sport
Friends
Happiness

2020 advice:

Don't take things for granted. Life comes quick and time waits for nobody. Enjoy in the present, dream about the future.

The past is gone, don't sweat the small stuff and enjoy yourself.

Sophie Curran

Covid Realisation

The 12th of March, our last day of normality, we had a normal school day except that me and some of the others on the Gaelic team were at the Girls' School in Letterkenny for our last ever trip and GAA match out of school. Little did we know.

I have not been able to stay with my Grandad.

I have been able to play football

I haven't seen my family abroad

I have been able to see my local friends

St Patrick's Day

Young families are excited for their first St Patrick's Day.


Little kids getting the face paint everywhere.

Older kids are bored at home.

Mammys are worrying and rushing.

Things I love that you might too

I love the summer season because
Of the long nights
And warm breezes,
I miss boarding aeroplanes and
The feeling of the hot gust of air against my face as I descend the aircraft,
I love roses as they bloom vibrant colours and
Emit powerful fragrances,
I love the colour red as it reminds me of
Someone special,
I love baking and cooking because of the creative freedom it involves
And the pleasure it brings to others,
I love fashion as it is part of my personality,
I love to laugh so hard, I cry
I love to blast the music so loud
I can't hear the world around me,
I love the beach as the air from the sea dissolves all the stress
In my mind,
I love New York as it is a place of precious memories,
I love stars as they radiate light in a place of
Darkness,



I love fireworks as they supply my dad with joy,
I love tea because of its distinct sense of warmth that travels down my throat,
I love my family as they mean the world to me,
I love animals as they have voices that can only be displayed
And not heard,

I love my friends as they support and accept me for me,

I love candles as they make a room

Feel cosy,

I love warm showers and bathes full of bubbles

As they create a sense of serenity,

I love movies for creating astonishing stories,

I love my home as it holds a feeling

Of safety,

But really, I love the world for giving me a life.

Agnieszka Sokol

Lost

Most things lost, are recognised
As forgotten or left behind
Misplaced somewhere, to your demise
Where you can't seem to find

Like that pencil, which was only new
or the pin that fell out of your hair
That tool you thought you'd never use
One sock missing from its pair

A frozen hat left on a fence
Coins hidden in the dust
A single page that makes no sense
An old shipwreck turned to rust

These things, sometimes, do get found
in ways you don't expect
but by the time they've come around
They've lost all your respect

So if you ever lose your mind
and people call you insane
Just give yourself a bit of time
and it'll return to you again

Since everyone forgets what's true
That they've all lost things too

Aaliyah Mullen

Dog Days

The days are stretching,
Blinking past
And I have stared at trees so often
I dream of silhouettes and branches
And I have read so much,
I might be more story than person
-made of parchment and printer's ink.
But angst is much less tragic than a funeral.

For now, the river stills runs like a heartbeat,
And the sky still smiles on sunny days.
And now there is music, space rovers and vaccines.

Soon, the streets will crowd again,
And the beaches will flood,
Plexiglass will fall,
The old man will finally meet his grandson,
And the friends will embrace again.

Bad times always feel heavier than the good,
Like just waiting for the final curtain to fall

But soon,
Dog days will be over,
I believe dog days will be over.



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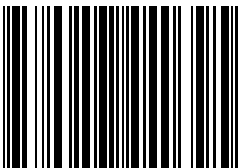
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