

The World Changes, Yet Hope Remains: *Change, the World Is Different* Shares the Stories of Children During the Pandemic

by Kuo Fu

The inspiration for author Chou Yao-ping's creation of *Change, the World Is Different* stems from a simple thought: "I want to write a book that shows how children around the world are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic." With the deft illustrations of artist Sun Hsin-Yu, this book presents the stories of children from countries such as Italy, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Brazil, offering a vivid portrayal of their lives during the pandemic through the eyes of children.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most significant events of the 21st century, deeply affecting the world on a wide scale. Countries closed borders,

economies were destabilized, schools and workplaces shut down, and fear swept through the population. However, in the face of this harsh challenge, humanity demonstrated remarkable resilience, and both human behavior and environmental conditions subtly changed.

The book uses specific examples to show how the pandemic sparked people's incredible adaptability. People suspended baskets to distribute food, converted trucks into mobile music classrooms, transformed rooftop gardens into vegetable plots, reopened outdoor cinemas, and used drones as assistants.

These stories highlight not only the resilience to adapt to adversity but also

how creativity and imagination inspired people to reinvent their way of life.

The book's design is also telling. The front butterfly page depicts people wearing face masks, indicating the profound changes brought about by the pandemic. On the back butterfly page, the image depicts temporarily closed physical stores, highlighting how home delivery and takeout have become the new norm. Everything seems to have changed, yet the final image of a family of three is hopeful: they walk hand in hand toward the setting sun, surrounded by the pink light of the evening sky. It reminds us that even though the path ahead is filled with challenges, we can still endure hardship and look forward to a new future.

Besides highlighting the resilience of individuals, the book also explores the environmental changes caused by the pandemic. Reduced human activity temporarily cleaned the air, quieted cities, and let nature reclaim some space. These stories capture a key moment in history, showing how even tough changes can

bring new opportunities and growth.

In conclusion, *Change, the World Is Different* is more than just a book about the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a celebration of human adaptability, creativity, and hope. Told from the perspective of children around the world, these stories remind us that even in times of immense change and challenge, hope remains. Through the gentle imagery and inspiring narratives, the book encourages us to look toward the future with optimism, knowing that despite the difficulties we face, we can find new ways to rebuild, connect, and move forward.

This essay has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

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May 2020
Hong Kong, China

Fingers danced across the piano keys, and notes spiraled out of the truck.

Due to the pandemic, no one dared to go out. The music school transformed a truck into a mobile classroom; it was parked right near my building. Before, my hands felt like they were encased in cement—I couldn't play well no matter how much I practiced. I wanted to give up. But when I heard that classes were resuming, the thought of fresh air and a marvelous mobile classroom excited me.

The new teacher greeted me. Then he asked, "How have you been?"

I froze for a moment and shook my head.

"In times like these, you need this! Here's something for you." The new teacher played a piece of music. "How does it make you feel?" he asked.

I smiled and whispered, "I feel like spinning and dancing."

"Then today, let's learn this piece. Play it with the feeling of spinning and dancing!"

Miraculously, my hands felt lighter. My fingers danced across the keys, and notes spiraled out of the truck—only to return, enveloping me. This was exactly what I needed in the moment. Even though

I couldn't take off my mask, I could still spin and dance.





June 2020
New York, USA

During an online lunch meeting, I showed off a dish made with sweet peppers that I grew myself. My friends were all so envious!

Because of the lockdown, my family and I decided to grow vegetables on the rooftop. At first, we couldn't even buy seeds. We had to save seeds from sweet peppers and other vegetables we managed to buy.

The first time I went to the rooftop to plant, I was surprised to find that my neighbor who lives next door was gardening, too; meanwhile, the man across the street already built a whole vegetable garden. Growing vegetables wasn't easy, but I could ask questions in a gardening group I found on social media. I discovered that the man across the street was quite active in this group—he even made his own compost and raised solitary bees to eat pests!

My spirits lifted every time I looked at the lush greenery that he had helped to create. As my own vegetables sprouted, joy leapt inside me. I also noticed other busy figures in the distance. Gradually, more and more colors broke through the grayness on the rooftops of New York.



July 2020
Lukomir, Bosnia

I ran all the way to my grandparents' house.

Life in the mountains has always remained unchanged, as if frozen in time. Every time I walk this path, it feels like traveling through a time tunnel to the past. But this time is different—it feels like running toward freedom!

The city had been under lockdown for so long, and it was such a relief when it finally reopened. Here, however, the virus had never appeared—there was no need for masks, gloves, or social distancing.

Grandma set aside the clothes she was sewing and welcomed me warmly. We talked and talked, without ceasing. I told her about my cousin's plan to compete in the traditional diving competition at the end of July—leaping off the Old Bridge in Mostar. "He's been training in an empty forest, keeping his distance from his coach. But he's worried the pandemic might worsen, and the competition could be canceled!"

"Oh, the world is always changing," said Grandma. She patted my shoulder. "The most important thing is to embrace the present fully."

Just then, Grandpa returned. I ran outside and hugged him tightly. I hugged my favorite sheep, too. Facing the mountains, I stretched my arms wide open and embraced the present with all my heart!