

Letters to Santa show children's pandemic fears

1st December, 2020



An unlikely source has revealed the pandemic fears of thousands of children across the world - Santa's mailbag. A post office in France that answers mail it receives for Santa has described the concerns children

have been expressing about COVID-19. The letters contain the usual requests for Christmas gifts, but many have emotional outpourings that provide an insight into how the coronavirus pandemic is troubling young minds. The post office has been responding to "Dear Santa" letters since 1962. A writer who replies to the notes said: "This year, we really feel their fears - for themselves, their grandparents or their parents. It's what really emerges from their letters. And in every country."

The post office has been inundated with around 12,000 letters per day. It has a team of 60 letter-writing "elves". They say that many children are confiding in Santa and expressing heartfelt fears that perhaps parents are in the dark about. One child wrote: "This year, more than the others, I need magic and to believe in you." Another child slipped a mask inside her envelope for Santa to not spread the virus. A "chief elf" explained the emotional toll on children. She said: "The letters to Santa are a sort of release for them. All this year they have been in lockdowns and have been deprived of school and their grandpas and grandmas....Children are putting into words everything they have felt during this period."

Sources: tvnz.co.nz / apnews.com / kstp.com

Writing

What three things can we do to help children with COVID-19 fears?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

source / pandemic / fears / Santa / mailbag / emotional / outpouring / young minds / post office / elf / in the dark / magic / envelope / release / lockdown / grandparents

True / False

- a) A post office in France revealed secrets of children's letters to Santa. T / F
- b) None of the letters to Santa contained requests for presents this year. T / F
- c) The letters revealed insights into the troubled minds of children. T / F
- d) The post office has been replying to letters to Santa since 1962. T / F
- e) The post office gets as many as 12,000 letters per week for Santa. T / F
- f) Many parents are unaware of their children's fears. T / F
- g) A child sent a mask to Santa to help him stop the virus from spreading. T / F
- h) The article says children have been deprived of counselling. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. unlikely | a. harm |
| 2. fears | b. appreciation of |
| 3. expressing | c. denied |
| 4. insight into | d. flooded |
| 5. emerges | e. conveying |
| 6. inundated | f. opening one's heart |
| 7. confiding | g. improbable |
| 8. toll | h. liberation |
| 9. release | i. becomes apparent |
| 10. deprived | j. anxieties |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of the coronavirus pandemic?
- b) How should we tell children about coronavirus?
- c) What do you think of the "Dear Santa" mail service?
- d) What would you ask Santa this year?
- e) What do you imagine children are worried about?
- f) What worried you as a child?
- g) How might coronavirus change children's future?
- h) What would you write to a worried child?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. An unlikely source has revealed | a. with around 12,000 letters |
| 2. concerns children have been expressing | b. on children |
| 3. provide an insight | c. from their letters |
| 4. This year, we really feel their | d. about COVID-19 |
| 5. It's what really emerges | e. the dark |
| 6. The post office has been inundated | f. in Santa |
| 7. many children are confiding | g. the pandemic fears |
| 8. parents are in | h. into how |
| 9. the emotional toll | i. they have felt |
| 10. putting into words everything | j. fears |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How worried are you about the pandemic?
- How can we stop children worrying about coronavirus?
- Would you write down your heartfelt fears?
- What magic would you like to create in the world?
- What emotional toll has the virus taken on you?
- Where do you think we will be this time next year?
- What questions would you like to ask the children?

Spelling

- evraeeld the pandemic fears
- icderbsed the concerns
- the usual esteurqs for Christmas gifts
- emotional ugrtpousni
- provide an tnihsig
- It's what really egmeres
- The post office has been tuidnnade
- children are nfdionicg in Santa
- slipped a mask inside her nvepeloe
- they have been in kdcnlowso
- been eddevipr of school
- uirgdn this period

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. j	3. e	4. b	5. i
6. d	7. f	8. a	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – English Book

You think an English book is the best Xmas gift. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gifts. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): shirt, masks or iTunes voucher.

Role B – Shirt

You think a shirt is the best Xmas gift. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gifts. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): English book, masks or iTunes voucher.

Role C – Masks

You think masks are the best Xmas gift. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gifts. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): shirt, English book or iTunes voucher.

Role D – iTunes Voucher

You think an iTunes voucher is the best Xmas gift. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their gifts. Also, tell the others which is the least desirable of these (and why): shirt, masks or English book.

Speaking – Xmas Gifts

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| • iTunes voucher | • English book |
| • Flowers | • Shirt |
| • Chocolates | • Masks |
| • McDonald's voucher | • Smartphone cover |

Answers – True False

a T b F c T d T e F f T g T h F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.