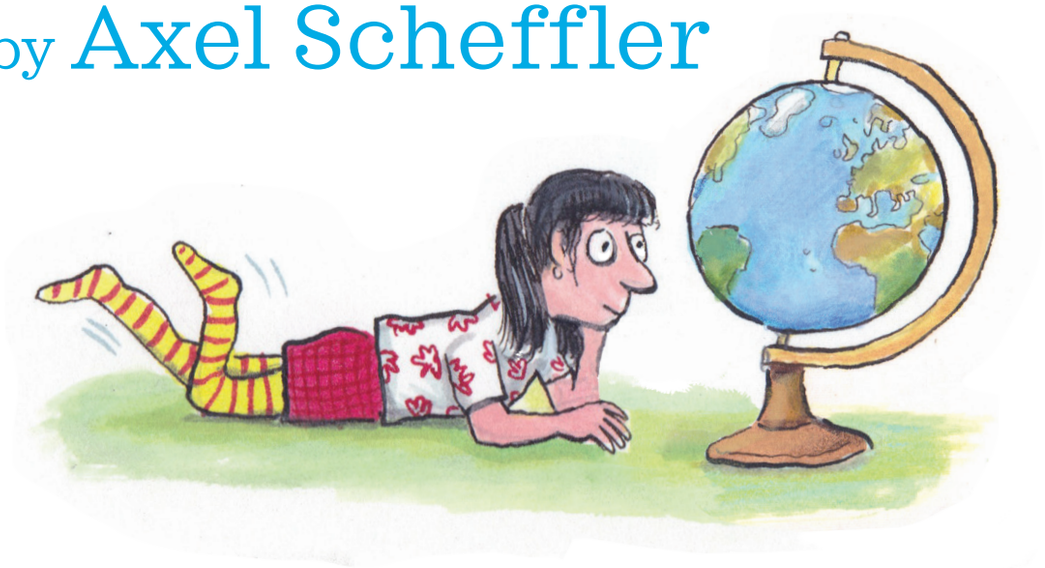
by Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson & Nia Roberts
Illustrated by Axel Scheffler



Coronavirus

A book for children

Consultant: Professor Graham Medley
Professor of Infectious Disease Modelling,
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

nosy crow

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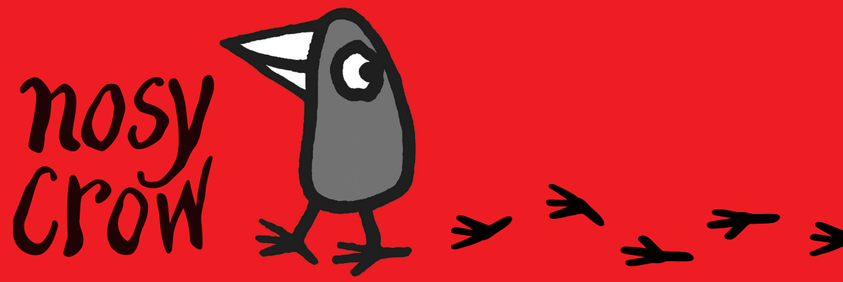

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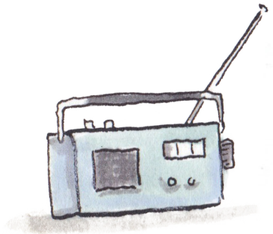
There's a new word you might have heard.

You might hear people talking about it or you might hear it on the news. This word is the reason that you're not going to school. It is the reason you can't go outside very often or visit your friends. It might be the reason why the grown-up or grown-ups who look after you are at home.

The word is



Coronavirus

WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS?

The coronavirus is a kind of **virus**.

Viruses are tiny germs that are so small that you can't see them.

They are so light that they can float through the air in tiny drops of water, and they can sit on your skin without you feeling them. If some of these germs get inside you, they can use your body to make more germs, and that can make you ill.

There are lots of different sorts of coronaviruses and some of them infect people. If you have been infected with one of these coronaviruses, all you probably had was a snotty nose or a cough.

But when this **completely new** coronavirus germ gets inside a human body, it causes an illness called COVID-19. When people talk about "catching the coronavirus", they are talking about this illness.

HOW DO YOU CATCH THE CORONAVIRUS?

Because this coronavirus is new, scientists don't know everything about it yet. But they think that there are two main ways that people can catch it.

Coronavirus germs live in people's throats and mouths. When someone who has the coronavirus coughs or sneezes or breathes out, the germs come out of their mouth in tiny drops of water.

Though you can't see the germs, you can sometimes see these tiny drops. In cold weather, they make a cloud of steam! So if someone else accidentally breathes in the air with the coronavirus germs in it, they would probably get the illness.

It's easy to get the coronavirus germs from inside your body on your hands when you touch your nose or your mouth.

If the person with the coronavirus germs on their hands uses a door, the invisible germs can live on the handle for hours. When someone else opens the door, they get the germs on their hands too.

And if they touch their nose or mouth, the germs can get into their body.

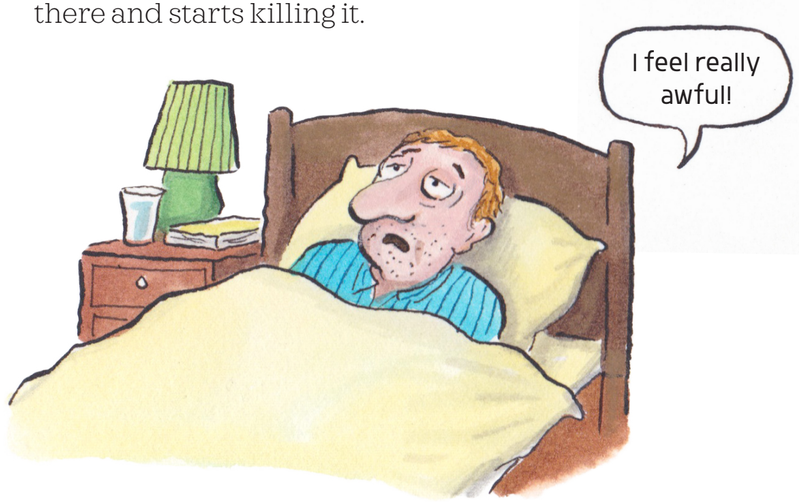
So you can also catch the coronavirus by touching things that someone with the virus has already touched.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU CATCH THE CORONAVIRUS?

Some people, particularly most children, hardly feel ill at all when they get the coronavirus. But they still have coronavirus germs in their body that they could give to someone else by mistake.

When they get the coronavirus, lots of people get coughs and a high temperature. Some people also have a headache or aches all over their body.

People are usually ill for a few days. But bodies are amazing things. When a new germ, like the coronavirus, gets into someone's body, their body knows that the germ shouldn't be there and starts killing it.



The body has an amazing weapon against viruses called **antibodies**. Tiny cells in your blood make antibodies to fight each different virus invader. The antibodies catch the viruses, then the blood cells swallow them up and destroy them and then the person gets better.

Each of us has more than 10 billion different kinds of antibody inside us.

That means there are more different antibodies inside you right now than there are people in the world!

SO WHY ARE PEOPLE WORRIED ABOUT CATCHING THE CORONAVIRUS?

Nearly everyone has a body that is healthy enough to fight the coronavirus. But there are some people who find it harder, because their bodies aren't as strong. They might be people who are more than 70 years old, or already have other illnesses like cancer that might make their bodies weaker.

They need more help to fight the coronavirus. This means they have to go to hospital and they might need to use a special machine called a **ventilator** to help them breathe.

However, sometimes even this might not be enough to help them get better and, if that happens, then sadly they might die.

That's why these people really need to stay at home, away from anywhere they might catch the coronavirus.

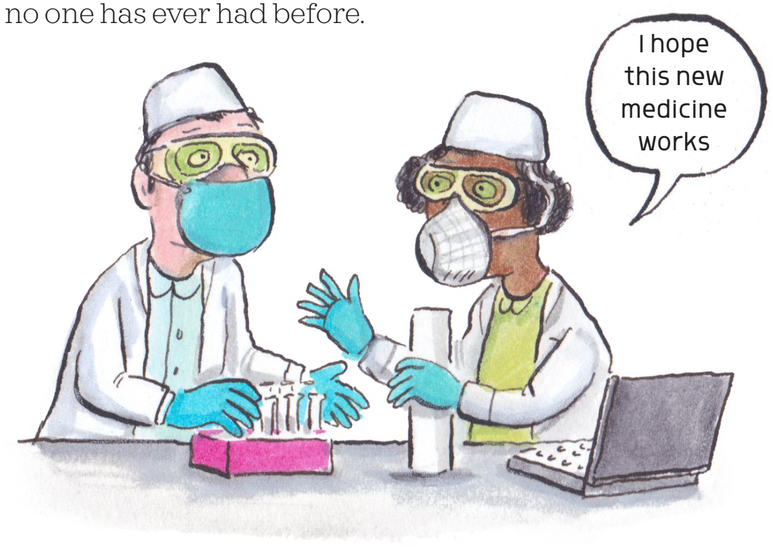
They won't be able to have visitors. That might mean you won't be able to go and visit some of your family for a while, to help keep them safe.

IS THERE A CURE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS?

Most people get better from the coronavirus by themselves. But doctors and scientists want to help everyone do that quickly and safely.

Doctors don't have a cure for the coronavirus yet because it is a new illness. Some medicines that doctors already know about might help, so they are trying them out on people who are ill.

But even if they don't work, scientists are also working on making completely new medicines for the coronavirus that no one has ever had before.



Another thing that scientists are working on is a **vaccine**.

A vaccine is a special medicine that is usually injected into your body while you are healthy. Inside the medicine are weak or dead virus germs. The antibodies in your blood can practise killing these germs, so that if you catch that virus, they can start fighting the live virus germs faster.

You probably already had some vaccines when you were a baby. So that means you won't get some illnesses!

It takes many months to make a new medicine. Before you can give it to lots of people, you have to make sure that it is safe for everyone, so you have to try it out carefully on a few people at a time. Then, when you know it works and is safe, you have to make enough for everyone who needs it.

WHY ARE SOME PLACES WE NORMALLY GO TO CLOSED?

Although lots of people will get better from the coronavirus, it's really important that people who might become very ill don't catch it. This means we need to make sure that as few people as possible get the coronavirus, so that we don't pass it on to anyone who might get very ill. And if lots of people get ill and have to go to hospital at the same time, then hospitals will get too busy to look after people properly.

It's so easy to get the coronavirus that we need to be very careful that we don't get too near people who don't live with us.

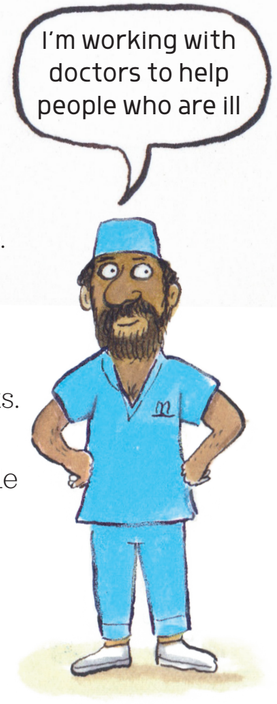
And that's why all the places where lots of people are together – like schools and libraries – are closed at the moment. The government of this country has said that people can only go outside their homes if they really, really have to.

Some people, like doctors or nurses or people who work in food shops or people who deliver things to our homes, have to go out of their homes to go to work.

Most people can also go out of their home if they need to buy food or to exercise, but they must be very careful not to go near anyone else.

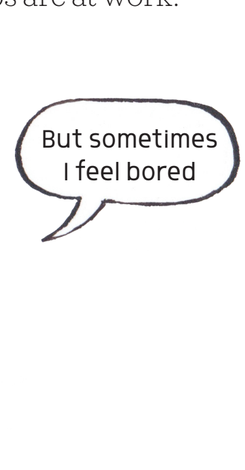
If you or anyone in your family feels ill, and thinks they might have the coronavirus, you can't come out of your home at all for two weeks.

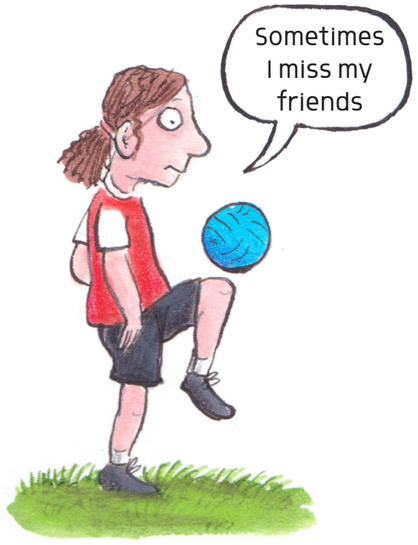
We all have to stay at home to protect the people who will find it hard to fight the coronavirus.



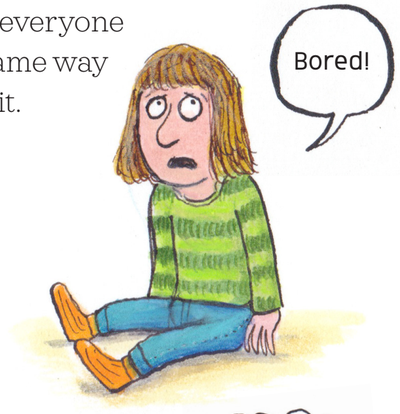
WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE AT HOME ALL THE TIME?

Sometimes being at home with the people you live with can be great fun. You can do things together that you wouldn't normally do when you are at school or when the grown-ups are at work.





These are all normal things to feel. And everyone who lives with you probably feels the same way sometimes, even if they try not to show it.



The grown-up or grown-ups who look after you might also feel worried. Sometimes they might feel worried about work. Sometimes it might be hard to buy the things that you all need, and that might worry them too.

If you are worried, talk about your worries to a grown-up who looks after you. If you are still going to school, maybe you could talk to a teacher. Or maybe you could talk to a teacher or someone else in your family on the phone or using a computer or tablet.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

You are already helping a lot by staying at home. But you can also help by taking extra care to make sure you don't catch or pass on the coronavirus to anybody else.

Did you know that viruses are killed by soap? So if you wash your hands really carefully and for long enough, you won't have any coronavirus germs on your hands. You can sing a song while you wash your hands to make sure you are washing them for long enough – long enough to sing Happy Birthday twice!

If you have to cough or sneeze, do it into the inside corner of your elbow, not on to your hand. Then you can't give the coronavirus to other people that way.

If you have to wipe or blow your nose, use a tissue and put it in the bin straight away. Remember to wash your hands too, because the coronavirus lives in your snot and it can get on to your hands from the tissue.

If everyone does these things, it will make a big difference!

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Another important thing you can do is to be kind to the people that you live with. Things will be different and perhaps difficult for all of you.

If you live with brothers and sisters, you might sometimes find them annoying. But try not to fight with them.

If you live with grown-ups, maybe you can help them by doing what you've been asked to do or giving them a big hug.

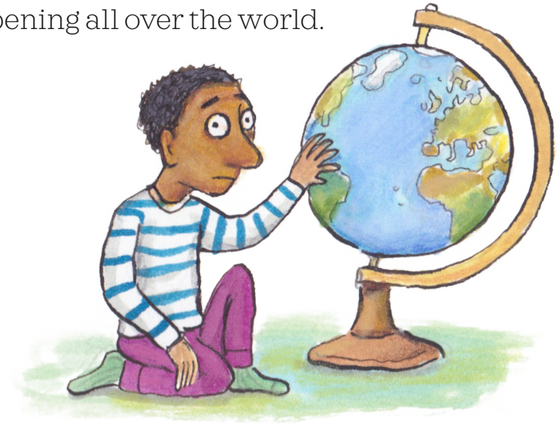
If you are not at school, do your school work. It will help to keep your mind busy, so you won't be bored. And then, when you go back to school, you will have learned a lot!

If you don't have a screen of your own, talk about how you can share screen time fairly with everyone who needs it.

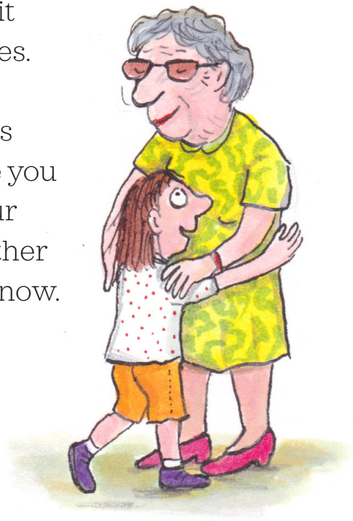
Remember, grown-ups who live with you might have to do work as well. If they do, you can help them by not disturbing them when they are trying to work. Then they will be more likely to have time to do fun things with you. Maybe you could make a list of things that you would like to do with them.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT?

This is a strange time for everybody,
and it's happening all over the world.



But if we are all careful and we all stay at home, we are doing what we can to stop the coronavirus spreading. And that gives the scientists and doctors time to work out how to cure the illness and maybe stop people getting it altogether by using medicines and vaccines.



One day, quite soon, though nobody knows exactly when, you'll be able to visit people you love who don't live with you, play with your friends, go to school again and do lots of other things that you enjoy but that you can't do now.

**One day,
this strange time
will be over.**

We did it
together!