

# Poetry Contest

2025



THE



WESTFIELD  
ATHENAEUM

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# Elementary Poetry Submissions

## k-4<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Peace Not War

By Gabriella Finkle



Part of me is speaking.  
Earth wants peace, not war.  
And I agree, but life is life.  
Certainly war has nothing good to do,  
Eventually it will end,  
And I want it to end.  
No reason to for senseless things,  
Do no bad things or war is already here.  
Would I rather have peace than war?  
The answer is easy. Do you agree?  
Rise peace and go away war.



# Zillo

By Louise Soller-Mihlek



My very favorite lizard, the best of all my friends,  
The bearded dragon Zillo, from tyrants he descends.

Best lizard in the world, I'll say,  
I come to see him every day.

He eats vegetables and bugs,  
Bugs too small to fit in mugs.

When I leave for school and say goodbye,  
I know tomorrow I'll see this guy



# Sweet Love

By Quinn Baddeley

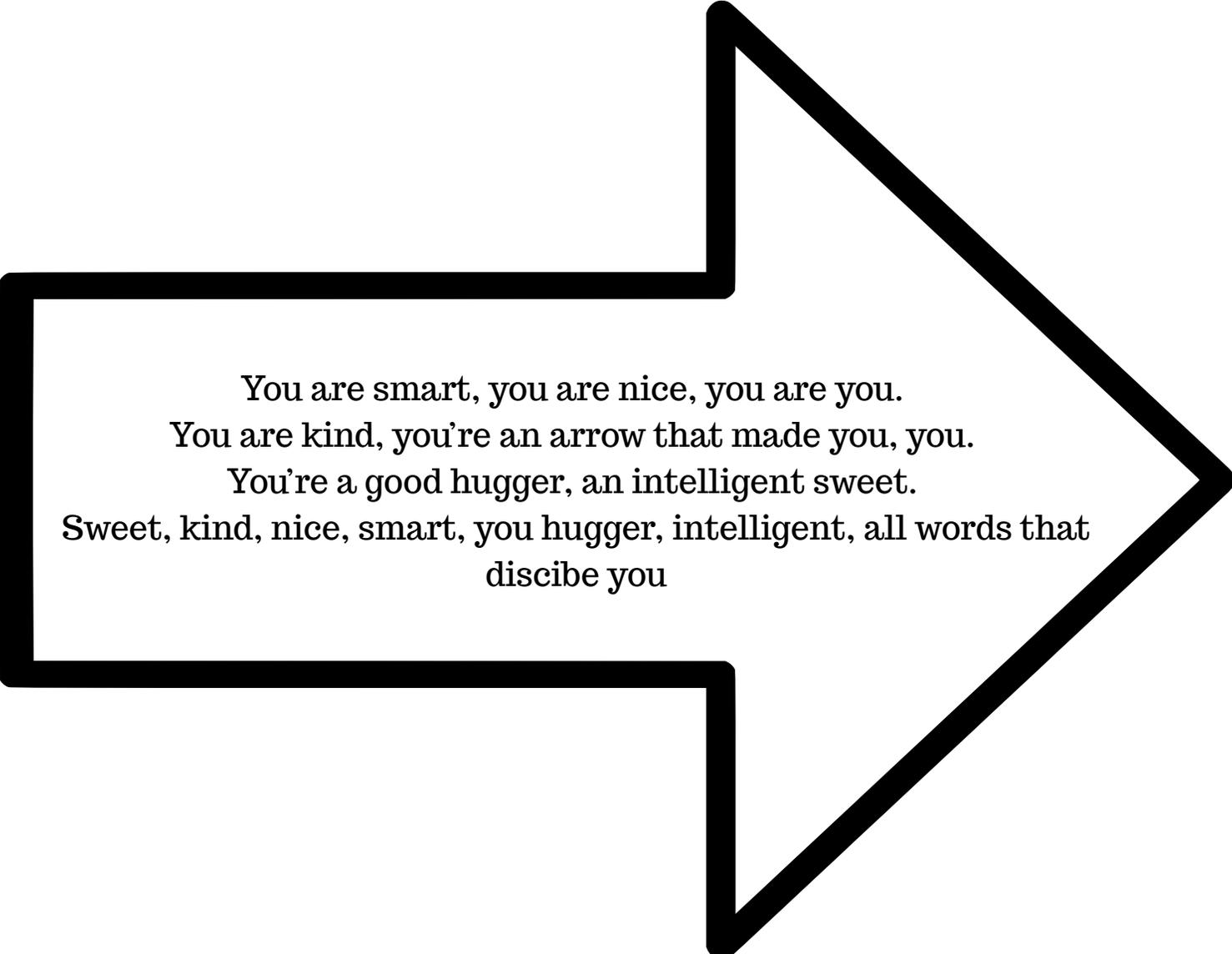


Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Chocolate is sweet and so are you  
You smell like sugar every day  
You're sweet I wish I could pay for the love you show  
It's like Christmas day.



# You

By Abbigail Tietze



You are smart, you are nice, you are you.  
You are kind, you're an arrow that made you, you.  
You're a good hugger, an intelligent sweet.  
Sweet, kind, nice, smart, you hugger, intelligent, all words that  
discibe you



# Pizza

By David Brown



So hot and cheesy,  
It has very crunchy crust  
Mmm, so delicious!



# Nature

By Mason Tortorici



Look up, see the sky.  
Look down, see the grass.  
Wherever you are, the park, the zoo, or even out your window you  
are always looking at nature



# Middle School Poetry Submissions

## 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Green

By Faith Patenaude



Green is the life of the trees  
Green is the air we breath  
Green is the gold of truth  
Green is the best for me and you.

Green



# Persistent Downpours

By Maddie Noska



Water drops and plops into the soil,  
Worms emerge and scatter across the ground.  
Skys dampen and light begins to decay.

Joyful moods begin to disappear,  
Time slowly advances.  
The constant dropping turns into repetitive distort of sound.  
Each leg is lifted and sifted for mud,  
While worms accumulate upon my body

The weight of the noise makes me combust.  
Subtle glances out the window reveal  
The constant ringing was a hoax, a deception.  
Power is constructed through an iridescent vision.  
Within reason to created



# Addiction

## By Saige Reynolds



Addiction is a disease

A disease that kills like each, other

A disease that will bring you to your knees begging for more

A disease that will affect your mother and every other

A disease that will leave your family tore

A disease that could smother you with stress and regret

A disease that will leave sore wounds forever

A disease that could leave you in great mental debt of memory

A disease that will sever your heart and mind

A disease that will go from generation to generation

A disease that will kill kind as you too

Disease kills as does addiction

Disease hurts as does addiction

Disease of loved ones leaves others in pain as does addiction

Disease ruins lives as does addiction

Disease takes and takes as does addiction

Disease can be passed down genetically as does addiction

You don't get the choice to have a disease or not

You get the choice to try addictions

Let it end with you

Addiction is a disease



# Victory Royale

By Muhammad Ayaan Taqi



Fortnite is my favorite game,  
Building fast and taking aim.  
Drop from the Battle Bus so high,  
Glide down fast I'm ready to try!  
Landed quick, I grab some loot,  
Shield up now I'm ready to shoot.  
Shotgun here, some minis too,  
Gotta be fast or I might lose!  
Storm is coming, gotta run,  
Building towers, this is fun!  
One last fight, it's just me and you,  
BOOM! I win  
For every gamer, big or small,  
Fortnite is the best of all! 🎮🔥



# Teacher

## By Soleil Schuster



**T** eaching to always try your best no matter what.

**E** ncouraging to step out of our comfort zone and try things.

**A** ccepting students for who they are

**C** aring about each student

**H** elping students to become a superstar

**E** xceeding teaching throughout each and every school year

**R** eally puts a lot of thought into each lesson to make it the best it can be.



# Our Memories

## By Samantha Sykes



Here I go again. I guess it's round two, I'm going to write about my WIS memories, and share it all with you.

It started in 5th grade, we were nervous to come to WIS, I started to miss SRS and miss my little sis. I started to get comfortable and made some friends, I loved my teachers and I didn't want 5th grade to end. We got to the middle of the year, and MCAS came around, we sat there with our computers while we all frowned. It came to the end of the year, but it was FIELD DAY! I didn't want to leave and go away. The last day of school, we were excited to go to the beach and pool. But we had tears in our eyes and all gave big sighs.

6th grade here we are, we felt like stars. I was happy to be back and to be learning about Mars. UMASS was our first field trip of the year, we watched the players while we cheered. I played 4-square every recess, then MCAS came again, but we were prepped and ready and couldn't care less.

We still have some time left in the school year, come enjoy it with me, our memories will stay strong, can't you see? We will miss WIS when we go to middle school, but we will fondly remember our teachers, who were never crue



# GOLD

By Ryan Pratt



Gold is like the good in beans  
Gold is like ancient mead  
Gold is victory by all means  
Gold is powerful just like greed

Gold is pollution of the mind  
Gold is bad like a pilots leans  
Gold is in our heads intertwined  
Gold rips us apart from the seams

Gold is fun young or old  
Gold is powerful more than all  
But Gold can't help the world unfold  
Gold makes you succumb to greed and become its thrall

If you see it it'll be a find  
Though it'll always corrupt your mind  
Gold always makes you blind  
And causes your head to be misaligned

Gold is dangerous like a new frontier  
Gold will end up being your puppeteer  
And Gold is used to strike fear  
Gold is the same to your heart as a spear





Gold is like the fun in life  
Gold is the completion of dreams  
Yet gold is a giant strife  
And Gold holds things down like the navy or marines



# Horses

By Dio Roman Muyet



Horses

Fast, big

Racing, galloping, jumping

Horseback riding is fun

Speedy



# Puppy

By Ava Curran



Puppy  
Fuzzy, naughty  
Jumping, chewing, eating  
Puppies are cute and fresh  
English Bulldog



# Sleep

By Ethan Jackewich



I hope no one makes a peep  
If I hear a noise I will leap  
Silence is what I pray  
Boy do I need some sleep  
Oh I heard a creep  
I wonder what they will say  
I hope no one makes a peep  
Just then my alarm started  
to beep  
Taking me away from the  
bay  
Boy do I need some sleep  
The ocean is deep  
The truck is filled with clay  
I hope no one makes a peep  
I'm trying not to weep  
My food is on the tray  
Boy do I need some sleep  
I hope no one makes a peep



# Silly Kittens

By Kristy Maxwell



Silly kittens love to play  
The sun is shining like a light  
Kittens play all day

These kittens love to play I'll say  
But it's getting a little less bright  
kittens play all day

The kittens play all day today  
If only it wasn't midnight  
Kittens play all day

I wish they could obey  
That i have to sleep at night  
Silly kittens love to play

I don't want them to go astray  
Let's turn on the light  
Kittens play all day

Kitties playing with my kite  
Oh, what a silly sight  
Silly kittens love to play  
Kittens play all day



# It's May

## By Genevieve Gintowt



It's May  
I need to take a flight  
I say

I'm at the bay  
I flew my kite  
It's May

It's a different day  
My cat gets fright  
I say

I went astray  
I went out of sight  
It's May

I know obey  
All I do is show my might  
I say

I can't play  
I only look into the light  
It's May  
I say



# THE COLOR BLUE

By Jonah Harper



The color blue  
Is not so blue  
Your pretty funky  
Like a monkey

The color blue  
Your like glue  
You are as bright  
As a termite

The color blue  
You have the flu  
Your as hot  
As a dot

The color blue  
Is not so blue  
Your pretty funky  
Like a monkey



# Goko When He Goes Home

By Jeanell



Goko can have a chime in his name  
But nobody can blame  
When he is home  
He fixes his tone



# The Starting Of Spring

## By Eric Deacon



**S** prouting flowers smell so nice like a nice cologne.

**P** recious memories waiting to be made.

**R** esting longer playing outside with people you care about most

**I** ncredible meals like corn, steak, burgers, fries, and campfires

**N** ew experiences like camping, nature walks

**G** reat adventures like Florida Cape Cod Mexico Puerto Rico



# Spring Meadow

## By Avery Ferst



**S**pring is a beautiful season of the year when flowers bloom

**P**rancing deer in meadows when the grass is growing

**R**ain falls the flowers are up from the ground as little sprouts

**I**n the meadows many flowers will grow animals will eat the grass

**N**ot knowing that spring just begun and flowers soon will be tall

**G**rowing plants are now tall and now you can't see an animal in the  
meadow



# Cats

By Lillian Grady



Cats  
Silly, Funny  
Jumping, Playing, Running  
Little troublemakers  
Animal



# I Am

By Mairin Shea



I am nice  
I wonder what can I do  
better  
I hear gossip from my  
friends  
I see the good side of me  
I want love  
I am how I want to be  
I pretend to be like others  
I feel many different things  
I touch grass  
I worry about people I care  
for  
I cry when I'm hurt  
I am kind to others  
understand the different  
sides of stories  
I say when I can't handle  
things  
I dream of good grandes  
I try my best  
I hope you are loved  
I am supportive



# I Am Poem

By Roselynn Hoffman



I am happy  
I wonder why people judge others  
I hear gossip  
I see true love  
I want real friends  
I am confident  
I pretend to understand  
I feel happy  
I touch grass  
I worry about the homeless  
I cry when I'm sad  
I am a true friend  
I understand you  
I say things i don't mean  
I dream of soccer  
I try my best  
I hope to have real friends  
I am a true person



# Hockey

By Ben Case



Hockey is the best,  
When you go so fast, do a move, shoot,  
and goal  
And finally when you get to the bench  
you can take a rest,  
Sometimes for Christmas you get a  
hockey stick or coal.



# Soccer

By Gregory Kondratyev



Soccer is the best sport  
Because you get to shoot  
First you need a soccer court  
Then you get a boot



# Spring

By Rebecca Rivest



**S** mell of fresh cut grass and flowers in the breeze

**P** erfect weather the sun shining and a small breeze to cool it  
down some

**R** ain that had just fallen dripping down my umbrella in the warm  
sunlight

**I** nspiring others on after noon walk

**N** ever a doubt in the world when sleeping in the hammock excited  
for summer

**G** oing on a noon walk always clears my mind with the flowers  
and the slight breeze cheers me up.



# Basketball

By Ray Dessereau



Basketball is super cool.  
You shouldn't play if you're a fool.  
Sometimes refs make bad calls they  
don't care.  
Do not foul just play fair



# Chip Flip

By Julie Gould



Gymnastics is so fun,  
I'm sad when it's all done.  
I love to do flips,  
Even while eating chips!



# Soccer

By Tymofii Haikevych



Soccer is Cool  
Because you can Shoot  
And I'm not a Fool  
Because I can shoot with  
the top of my boot



# In the Field

By London Savaria



We are in the field  
We are together where no one can get us  
Flowers grow as we laugh, talk, and sing  
We must leave each other soon  
But that is not now  
We run through the field  
It is merely a memory  
But just as strong as real life  
Your eyes glow beautifully  
You fade away  
But each morning give me strength for a new day



# High School Poetry Submissions

## 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Symphony

By Gianna Beluzo



A lone bow stretches across strings, gliding smoothly  
Vibrating, speaking  
Noise floats up into the sky  
Melody rings out clearly  
The notes-  
Long  
Pulled  
Gently forced into place.  
Rough around the edges-  
But not sharp-  
Clear and sweet as a running stream  
Like a cool spring morning  
Like a breath of fresh air.  
As more string join in,  
A song is formed  
No longer just noise  
It's beautiful and  
Wistful yet  
Full of such joy.  
The bows rub hard and fast  
Whizzing, swirling, flying.  
Wings rub together in the heavy cloak of a dark, thick midsummer night-  
A sound is born  
An echo, an explosion  
As a cricket perches in the grass  
It begins to play its tune



# Daughter

By Lily Harris



The heat is overwhelming  
My arms, legs, and face are  
dripping into puddles at my feet  
I wasn't made to tolerate this kind of weather well  
As people walk by, they squint  
My skin is perfectly tinted  
to reflect the midday sun  
All the same, they pause to marvel  
I am beautiful  
Sculpted to delight the envious eyes  
that gaze upon me.  
My mother basks in this admiration.  
I am losing my form. Not designed to endure  
intrigued hands reaching out to touch.  
Their fingers return shining and damp.  
I am  
melting, rivulets of water  
run down my  
face.  
Mother? I can't  
see myself.  
I'm  
Afraid you  
molded me so  
pretty to  
Amuse.



# Star Gazing

By Lily Harris



The summer sky is riper than red  
Half past sunset and the night  
Digs up bodies in his backyard  
Their gases erupting into stars

The campsite is full of stealth  
Kids spotlighting possums  
But we sit in rickety chairs  
Eating smores melting on our fingers  
Watching the satellites roll by

They unzip the night sky  
In black spaces between treetops  
We catch one under Orion's Belt  
Moving like a bus along a lamp lit street  
If you missed it catch the next one  
Ten thousand rolling by

We map them on a clock face  
Between the windmill palm and camp kitchen  
Speaking women's business and eating pizza  
Sitting next to our bags in the old wooden cabin

Dust and debris shoot overhead  
Streaks of light and a thrill of wishes  
But satellites pass like city buses  
Way beyond the fickle sky



# Adult Poetry Submissions





# What We All Crave

## By Alyssa Charland



It's like sunshine on a rainy afternoon,

It's like tea after an ill-lit night,

It's like spotting a tiger lily that just seemed to appear at just the right  
moment out your window,

It's like a warm cozy bath that seems to strengthen your heart,

Love...

It's the feeling of pleasure, fondness, tenderness, pure passion,

It's the adoration one gives after a long day,

The compassion one shows to help after a sad dull morning,

And it's the reverence one shows to another just because,

Love...

No better way to describe it,

Love it's what a living soul desires.





# Muddy Water

## By Nancy



I met a little girl yesterday.  
Well, we didn't officially meet.  
We played in a puddle,  
muddy water splashing our feet  
Hers covered by sparkles,  
welleys so perfect and neat.  
Mine with treads hiding  
some worn elderly feet.  
For a moment in time  
our years didn't matter.  
Names, introductions,  
chatter to flatter.  
Our dandelions floated  
atop the spurious river,  
rivulets lovingly daring to quiver.  
For a moment in time  
the world had stood still  
as we bonded and wandered  
down old Gilwell Hill



# My Inheritance

## By Sharon Silver



It was a game she wanted the grandkids to play,  
or so it seemed when we made our lists:  
write down the things you want

when she goes.  
Ten years old

and all I could think of was the giant  
pinecone, the garden gloves, the iron horse  
standing guard on the hearth, the Bomba books

with bent  
and broken bindings.

Today I played the game again:  
write down the things you want

when she goes.  
Twenty-nine years old

and all I could think  
of was the smell of fresh tomatoes,  
the tang of lemon drops, the sizzle  
of dandelion pancakes in the frying pan

the colors of sunset seen from the park bench.





# Trigonometrically

## By Ben Silver



Poetry will prove  
the mathematical truth.  
My partner in crime,

to me, our story/  
relationship - modern love,  
give, take - is balance.

Comforted by paths  
only a phase shift away;  
sine and cosine dance,

weave, and cha-cha slide,  
trigonometrically.  
Turn counterclockwise -

unit) circle on!  
The infinite direction  
of geometry:

points are ordered pairs  
on a timeline of our love.  
Cartesian coordinates -

tell us where we've been;  
x, y, locations -  
tell us where we'll go.

Forty-five degrees,  
we hold hands every meeting.  
Ships in the night, pass.

Appreciating  
our ephemeral beauty.  
I don't like good-byes.

Always circling.  
Yet, wave patterns flow outward.  
Music of the spheres -

heavenly bodies  
gravitate around again.  
Isaac Newton knew.

You danced with me  
to "Stand by Me" (the song)  
3 years, tomorrow.



Temporal flashback  
to the best night of my life.  
Forever smiling.

You, love of my life,  
meet you at pi over four?  
Q.E.D. Got it?

Infinite and good -  
love threads together the heart.  
Woven strands link us -

your sine rises up,  
while my cosine descends, curves,  
and gradually arcs.

Pythagoras knew  
we'd make a good team. In love,  
hands clasped, dancing 'round.

See, you twirl along  
your trajectory, while I  
follow your ups, downs.

And we ride these waves  
together. Apart again.  
Together again.





# Morning Coffee

By Morgahn Rys



Eyes open reluctantly,  
As I'm met with birds in song.  
All the world is bright, and yet;  
I don't feel I belong.

I pull my blankets overhead,  
Hoping to avoid the day.  
Though greeted by the golden sun,  
Its warmth drives me away.

But then the morning's promise,  
Prompting me to sit upright,  
Provides the motivation  
Of a single goal in sight.

So shaking off my sleep,  
And still attempting not to weep,  
Outside my room I step,  
Toward the drink I plan to prep.

Though life may feel heavy,  
I know one thing that's strong:  
A good cup of coffee  
Has never steered me wrong.



Beginning with the beans,  
As they still need to be ground.  
I start the rumbling kettle,  
A most reassuring sound.  
The carafe sits on the counter,  
As a sign of future growth.  
While the vessel may be empty,  
That will soon change for us both.

So as I pour out all my pain,  
I watch it filter, watch it strain.  
See water into coffee brew,  
The promise of a life made new.

It's smooth aroma swaddles me,  
and soothes my fears away.  
And as my mug is filled, I sense  
That everything will be okay.

What may seem a simple task,  
Is really a courageous feat.  
By adding in the cream and sugar,  
I dare life to be sweet.

And with my drink at last prepared,  
The moment I looked forward to:  
That first sip a reminder,  
"I am always here for you."

So thank you to my coffee cup,  
The only reason I got up.  
Aided by this loyal friend,  
I rise and face the day, again.





# Endless Flow

## By Amber Sayer



Dusk rumbles like a hungry stomach; the siren song for the male imagoes.

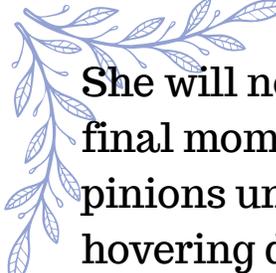
They convene, gliding into upward-twirling airstream, kissing the breath above the water. Each mayfly falls into line like a synchronized swimmer, up and forward, then sweeping downward as a collective current of shimmering wings dotted with dark bodies.

The females spot the tumbling swarm, folding themselves into the rolling waves of bodies and wings. Each insect is on both its maiden and swan song flight, the fleeting hours of winged existence fading as quickly as the reddened sky bruises to purple and black.

Males cling to females, briefly shocking her by clutching her wings like the suckling infant she'll never feed. She has no say and soon releases a glassy river, made not from water droplets but thousands of future lives who will someday do the same dance during the brief doorway between wingless and having no chances to use them.

Each silvery orb floats briefly, suspended by surface tension, creating ribbons of translucent glitter before they fall like teardrops to the bottom of the silty Mississippi.

They will never meet their mother; she will never see the eggs bloom into nymphs.



She will never see another dawn, the last egg leaves her body will be her final moments before she is a lifeless watercraft floating away on lacy pinions until plucked from the water's surface by lurking fish or hovering dragonflies.

The eggs settle on vegetation and rocks, underwater, waiting for several cycles of dawns and dusks to emerge from their opalescent shells.

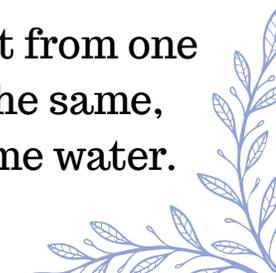
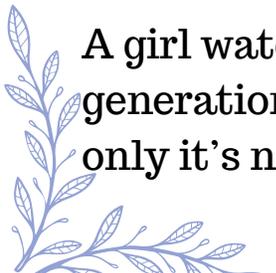
Then, as if coordinated by an undersea conductor, 18 trillion *Hexagenia limbata* nymphs hatch in synchronized unity, more than 3,000 times the number of humans on earth.

The water is cold and dark, and each nymph is drawn towards the light, pulling their body free from the shackles of their shucks towards the water's surface. It's a perilous journey, many gobbled up by predatory fish and insects before ever reaching the surface to dry their wings.

Subimagos never get to know their bodies, living as an ever-undressing being shedding and emerging as much as the water changes in the passing current. First, her opaque wings are tinted with gray, then periwinkle blue to golden yellow, ending in mossy green. Her majestic artistry is overlooked though she's an individual display of mother nature's colors on a spinning palette.

Several months later, the day comes for her final costume change. She's a spinner for less time than one arc of the sun over the sprawling bayou sky.

She will do the dance of her mother, decorating the Mississippi with thousands of pearls, and float away as a lifeless exoskeleton.



A girl watching on the banks of the river sees nothing different from one generation to the next. The cycle is the same, the river looks the same, only it's not because it's not the same mayflies. It's not the same water.



# Fragments

By Catherine York



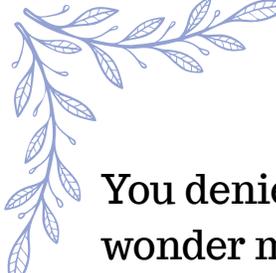
Fragments are all I have left  
Pieces are all I pick up from the family you left undone  
You let it all come apart like swirl of ribbons

I replay all the noise in my head  
God, I wish I could just put you to bed  
Even in death you will not die  
How many times must I say goodbye?

We connected through your pain  
The wounds you left leave us both lame  
I want to make it all make sense  
I want you to feel my consequence

Would it matter or would my pain be gathered with laughter?  
More questions that answers that is the game  
All I have left of you is a soon to be extinct and fragmented last name

I stand by your grave and weep  
It mimic the last time I saw you sleep  
I said my goodbyes through tear filled eyes through I could not be sure  
why I cried



You denied me right until the end unwilling to even slightly bend, no  
wonder my wounded heart could not mend

Fragments of you break and bend me everyday

I lean and I sway trying to find my way like the lost girl you denied  
until your dying day

What fragments made you that way?

I wish you would have shared your heart with me then maybe we both  
could have seen

It was not meant to be

Your fragments will rip and tear laying only my soul yo bare

Whispering did you even care?

What a hell of a question to have to ask

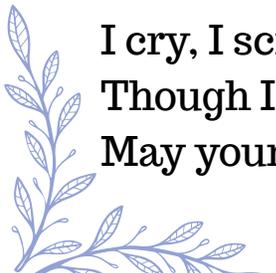
Why did you always put me last?

I look in the mirror and see glimpses of you the man I never really  
knew

My gaze hits the ground with a tear

I will live no more in fear

Your fragments will always live in me but in your death, I am free, free  
yo rearrange and repair the fragments that damaged deep within me



I cry, I scream, I yell, I wail

Though I will not fail in healing the fragments of we.

May your soul and all its fragments rest in piece.



# Late Night Blues

By Donnie Adler



I sit here in the dark,  
I listen to the music.  
The music speaks to me  
The only thing that understands

The late-night blues are calling.  
It's a sound that is all too familiar.  
The sound of loneliness, isolation.  
It's the sound of a soul in pain

There is a pain that haunts the night.  
It knows how to find me,  
And it knows where to find me,  
And takes control when I am awake.

But for now, I'll just sit here and listen to the music,  
And let the blues wash over me.  
Maybe, just maybe,  
Those late-night blues will take away the pain.



# Advocacy

## By Robert Edwards



1990 was the year,  
I became an advocate,  
But not only this  
I am a disabled advocate.

Brain injury awareness  
is what I advocate  
Soccer is fantastic!  
We must protect our heads!

I proudly joined the  
Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts  
from 1990-now  
Let us protect ourselves!



# Soul Food

By Erica Graham



The cramped kitchen is redolent of sweet onions  
Clanging of saucers, utensils, and greasy pans  
Ding sound of a hot oven  
Women cook around the bubbling pot  
Southern bean soup is warming on the gas stove  
Adding a pinch of resilience  
Each ingredient is a testament to their strength  
All blended together  
Sharing the warmth of our African-American struggles  
A sense of history and heritage  
Friendship is deeply rooted  
Singing and dancing  
Holding strong through every challenge  
Laughter echoes the house  
Eyes are moist with tears  
Smell of fried chicken fills the room  
Family tradition surrounds the Sunday dinner table  
Black love is celebrated  
Yams are collards are in the center  
Crumbly cornbread is on the side



# Hands

By Lea Galanter



after Mosab Adu Toma

See these hands  
constellations lined with stories  
seas of stars hidden in crevices  
are filled with memories of love  
cloudscapes float through hot palms  
while limbs reach out for new life

Look closely now  
the digitus anularis reveals a jagged line  
remnants of the stitches  
caused by a childhood game  
adorned only with rings  
of a long-dead ancestor



# A Home

By Joseph Sbrega



A home is a shelter, a thing, a living place,  
Something that will put a smile on your face.  
Sometimes you go there to be glad,  
Or come in and see your dad.  
When you come in like a bomb,  
Why don't you go and hug your mom.  
When you work and get a blister,  
Go and see your loving sister.  
Oh, before my song is sung,  
A home is where your heart is hung.



# Be

By Abbie Shanahan



When everything turns on its head,  
and cruelty seems the victor;  
When the words in red aren't heard at all  
and instead are used to splinter;  
When fiction becomes fact  
And facts no longer matter;  
When the intent is not just to break  
But to target souls to shatter.  
Be the light that you can no longer see.  
Be the calm so that your neighbor can breathe.  
And if you can not be these.  
Sit beside,  
and simply  
Be.



# Dad and Mom

## By Trudy Knowles



My dad was a man of words.  
A poet, a pastor, a puzzle maker.

A poet of words.  
Hundreds upon hundreds of rhymes  
Songs of grief, sorrow, laughter, joy.  
“Dream big,” he said.  
“Don’t be afraid to create.”

A pastor of words.  
Love your neighbor.  
Feed the hungry.  
Welcome the immigrant.  
“Make the world a better place,” he said.  
“Fight for justice.  
Give your all to the world.”

A puzzle maker of words  
Completing the border first  
Before filling the center  
Never looking at the top of the box  
To see what was expected.  
“Love yourself first,” he said.



“Don’t do what others expect.  
You are a blank canvas.  
Find your border.  
Then fill in the center.”

My mom was a women of compassion.  
A bandleader, a baker, a brave heart.

A bandleader of compassion  
Orchestrating five children,  
Knowing the part each one played.  
Letting them play each part.  
Sometimes chaotically.  
Sometimes in tune.  
“Embrace the music.  
Even when it’s off key,” she said.  
“Play until it comes in tune”

A baker of compassion  
Brownies cooked to perfection  
Created from a mistaken cookie recipe.  
Baked, not for the family.  
For the sick, the injured, the lonely.  
“mistakes can lead to wonderful discoveries,” she said.  
“Share yours with the world.”





A brave heart of compassion.  
Slipping more and more each day  
Into dementia  
Bravely  
Always remembering the love.  
“It’s all about the love,” she said.  
“Always about the love.”

My parents were heroes.  
Poet  
Pastor  
Puzzlemaker  
Bandleader  
Baker  
Brave heart

They showed me that the road to justice is a long road  
“Be grateful,” they said, “And walk that road with joy.  
Walk that road with love.  
Walk your life with love.”



# To Not Be

## By Melissa Wayner



To not even be remotely overjoyed at this time of year is not good.  
It is supposed to be one's favorite time.  
The mind is beyond the happiness.  
The heart just does not feel it there or into it this year.  
The struggle is real.  
The pain is piercing through the heart.  
Hope is losing its touch as time is ticking and the uncertainty is  
running high.  
Stresses heightened and too much for the body to handle.  
The body just starts to shut down and deuterate from inside out.  
The skin starts to pull in your insides and freeze your emotions.  
The movement starts to slow down and weaken.  
The spirit declines for the season and for a reason.  
The fear of the unknown is Earth shattering to the heart.  
When will the spirit be back? When will it all be back?  
When that specific moment happens, it will!  
To Not Be in Fear of The Unknown!



# Heart Fire

By Anna Bauver



Happy,  
With deathless lips,  
You smiled.  
And love,  
Like crimson sunsets,  
Flowed through your veins.  
I am safe  
Within your peaceful heart.  
And the sun will warm me now.  
It filters through the smoke  
Like  
Smooth  
Fiery  
Pain.  
I love the sun.



# Journey

By Deanna Dunn



Eyes Flutter open  
Embrace each sunrise sunset  
Exhale and release



# Inside the Tombs of Amun

## By Joseph Vass



Sea-spattered chevrons  
of the whitecaps rise  
Roiling restless  
as the soul of purgatory.  
And she a Nubian queen  
dancing beyond the borders  
Of empire's longing forever  
Weightless along its crests.  
He spectral light outshining  
immortal corridors in time  
As the alabaster god  
awakens from his feckless ruin  
Long after the kingdom's fall.

Pour sleep as dark as beauty  
into the delving fire  
Of her belly. Her prodigal womb  
lies fallow but not empty  
For she dreams.  
Born of nocturnal stillness  
Like a bowl filled with silence  
a yearning so tender  
That it stirs the echo  
of some voice she once had known  
But could not now recall.  
Even the heart of a queen, she says  
Must break before it can mend.



The skirting of many borders  
through the foreign landscape  
Of a woman's womb.  
A geography of longing  
That can never be mapped  
for it is ever-changing.  
A dangerous journey for a man  
or even a god were it known  
That even the infinite becomes  
dulled by the whetstone of time.

Blindly he follows  
it may contours  
To the inevitable end.  
As lost as any man  
Or even a god has been.  
For he dreams.



# A Brave Journey

## By Krista Tetreault



I am here  
In the quite of my mind,  
An uncomfortable place  
Filled with doubts, fears and grief.  
I keep this quite room sealed,  
Afraid of what will be unearthed.  
Shadows hover and close in.  
Warning flood my nervous system screaming  
Watch out!  
Run!  
Don't stay!  
Every piece of courage is summoned  
To root me here.  
Exploring and forcing my anxious  
Questions to reckoned with.  
Am I a fraud?  
Who am I really?  
Why can't I just be content?  
Will finding, embrace and accepting  
Answers take all of my life?  
The journey seems impossible  
Each step an internal struggle.  
Support, strength, trust  
Need to be packed carefully for this trip  
Of awareness and awakening.  
Where will my destination end up being?  
Will I be brave enough to fine out?



# If The Sky Was Black

## By William A. Serrano



*If the sky was black, what would it matter? Darkened shades of reality wash my hands;*

As she further withdraws, my realm of happiness shatters. Something whole is no more, I am a broken man.

Dreams divulged, vanished love, torn intimacy. The guidelines of my kingdom departed.

Questioning my own being, I'm forced to survive. Surveying the destruction of what my heart achieved; I wonder.

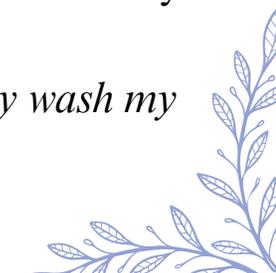
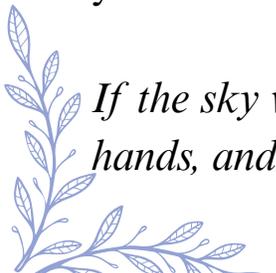
*If the sky was black, what would it matter? Darkened shades of reality wash my hands;*

A sentiment of betrayal, a whisper of rain, a hint of decay: I'm alone in this place; cement my memories, gripped by hope.

The words of the past, grasp at my tongue. Regret holds it steady. Silence is my peace, misery is my day, dejection is my life.

What was shall be no more, what once, is gone. A faded picture is all that's left of you. Reminisce, just about us two. The thought consumes me, just as it shall you.

*If the sky was black, what would it matter? Darkened shades of reality wash my hands, and finally I realize; You're gone*





# The Girl That Used To Be

## By Kailynn Colombani



The girl that used to be happy  
Is no longer longer here  
The loneliness finally consumed her  
The only friend she has is fear

In her bed alone at night  
thoughts circle in her head  
“You are useless,  
you are worthless,  
You are nothing.”  
She wished she was dead

The girl that used to be cheerful  
Is gone, she disappeared  
She didn't try to fight the thoughts  
No one's help would persevere

On the bathroom floor she laid  
Tears and blood both streaming  
One cut, then two cuts  
Pain escaping from her wounds  
Her twisted healing, beaming



The girl that used to laugh nonstop  
Paints a smile on when she leaves  
With a tortured sense of urgency  
Can anyone see what she might achieve

The girl that used to join in on the fun  
Was a bystander in her own life  
She's a ghost of the girl that used to be  
Not a mother, a daughter, a wife

Young, wild, and free she was  
Her whole life was ahead  
Plans for the future  
Tarnished, spoiled, forgotten  
Depression back to offend