

Youth: K-2 Category

Winner: "Reading Books" by Diaan M.

Reading Books

Read with Joy!

Every day read one book,

At bed, reading all the time,

Don't stop Learning!

Imagining is important.

Never stop reading!

Great feelings we get!

Better things to know,

Outside reading is fun!

Oh, there are many types of books,

Knowledge we get!

Summer is the best time for Beach reading

Acrostic poem
by Diaan Malde

Honorable Mention: “[when you giggle]” by Kadriela A.

When you giggle, do the
jiggle. Don't forget to laugh
a little. When your day is
grim and tough, don't
forget to laugh a lot. I'm just
here to say, don't forget to
laugh all day. Yay!

Youth: 3-5 Category

Winner: "Dragon's life" by Grace Z.

Cracked shell, brand new, a curious eye
Pokes out. The first thing I see, a bright world,
And I find myself on a soft, dewy bed,
My hatchmates and family there with me.

Flying at last, my wings unfolded, and
Romp through fields of flowers, perfumed air
All around me, as my bright wings fanned
The ground anywhere and everywhere.

Full-grown now, no longer a wee hatchling,
I gained knowledge, friends, a home, and
To be here is to mean that traveling,
To dragons, is all we could ever want..

At last, my journey ends. At last, I rest.
I close my eyes here, I wish you the best.

Honorable Mention: "Shall I Compare Thee to a Starry Sky?" by Akilan K.

Shall I compare thee to a starry sky?
Is it you staying the night?
Well, have no fright.
Spite the dark the light is here.

Is there anything more magical than you?
Is there anything you can't do?
I am speechless about you.
You've inspired me too.

We're out of the woods now.
We don't have to wear hoods now.
One must be none, but two must be known.
I will admire you always.

So long live this so thee may too!

Middle School Category

Winner: "[I'm from]" by Christian K.

I'm from the loud streets of Iraq.
I'm from the beautiful roads of Jordan.
I'm from the silent town of Troy, Michigan.

I'm from the deep Chaldean and Syrian cultures.
I'm from a happy and peaceful family of four.

I'm from deejaying, the amazing sounds of music.
I'm from the blaring parties with the
 The sound of music ringing the ears
 crowds of people
 Dirty dance floors
 The tasteful Arabic food
 And the thick dense smell of all of these things combined.

I'm from the yummy flavors of Japanese cuisines.
I'm from eating melted ice cream in the heat of the sun.

I'm from watching movies with my dad in the summer.
I'm from playing Uno with my family.

I'm from cruising the smooth waters of the open sea.
I'm from smelling the watery smell of rain.
I'm from adventuring the world around me.

I'm from nervously doing a test in school.
I'm from laughing at the littlest things with my friends.

I'm from playing the swift sport of ping pong, my enjoyable side.
I'm from contending against my brother, my competitive side.
I'm from studying late at night, my focused side.
I'm from the road, the road that life has put me on.

Honorable Mention: "Anxiety" by Iulia S.

It always comes and finds me
each night leaving me
alone, stranded
stressed
My father tells me to breathe
and my breath blows it away
But only for now
Only until tomorrow night when
It comes again and I must
brave the beast and
blow it away
Then the peace comes, and I
may rest

Teen Category

Winner: "Strength of a Mountain" by Tejaaswin Raja

It feels like I'm leaving myself behind,
My skin and bones,
Maybe this wasn't the right thing to do.
Maybe we should recur.

My Manman always says we cannot get anything for free.
We have to meet the Iwa halfway,
For worship and prayer are not enough,
And so, I know what I must do.

And then tomorrow, she will come back to me,
Une belle vie, she always promised,
My Manman is the one who will fix my life,
Until then, I can't have anyone in my heart.
Maybe we should recur.

Red darkness,
Like blood from the deepest depths of my heart,
My heart pumps flames, I am a volcano,
God's drive and the burning desire for my mother,
Tell me to go back.

But maybe, we will get my Manman.
I call the spirit to bend reality,
To connect me and my Manman.
And our love, as deep as an ocean.

Maybe this was meant to be,
An eye for an eye,
In the end,
I will surely reach my Manman.

Now, the cold wants to swallow me whole,
But we can't go back.
Maybe this was not the right thing to do.
But it doesn't matter.

As I am a mountain, not a pebble,
And I am made of steel.
I must have conviction,
And stand by my decision.

Honorable Mention: “Transcendence” by Syeda Tabassum

As I turn my face to seek the warmth of the rising sun
I stand in the breathtaking view of all that is nature
The knowledge of countless other observers
Hidden within the breaking of the dawn

A beauty to behold as the world is reborn and the sunlight unfolds
The breeze blows through and stirs the leaves
Filling the air with the sweet scent of rebirth
A melody to stir my heart to beat with the rhythm of the universe

As the night takes its hold, a canvas of wishes painted above
Each star a distant promise, a story yet to be told
Whispers of galaxies entwine, a cosmic dance in the infinite space
A reminder that some secrets are best left undisturbed

Transcending beyond the silence of existing
The day fades into a dream where the constellations shine with grace
The celestial sky captivates my gaze and I have to remind myself
Not to linger too long at the magnificence or

You'll unmask the careful facade of the world

Adult Category

Winner: "Village Doctor" by Nadia Ibrashi

My husband played accordion at the foothill of mountains
in Eastern Europe, *Kukavice*,
a village named for its Cuckoo birds.
He sold water from a tin can to carnival dwellers.
His father traded carpets, his mother cared for her small patch
of green, chickens and lone cow.
Oh, happy memories he shares with me, music kissing
the sky as he taps his foot, the piece of sugar *Meijka*
spared for him, how stars shone with secret psalms.
Now his office shelters carpets, displays accordions.
His brain-injured patients say music therapy showers joy,
as they bear gifts of honey, home-grown tomatoes,
braided bread.
My husband tells me of a blind patient with whom
he shared lunch, how they laughed, made music.
From a Detroit suburb, my husband's favorite tunes
still rise from childhood meadows,
where the air sings of plum trees,
where he's become the village doctor.

Honorable Mention: “at last, the last breath” by Allison Wei

Today life feels fragile
Every rise and fall of the ribs
Like a small bird
 returning and leaving its cage

What has it seen on its journey
Its small beady pupil has peered into

 tomatoes blossoming in the spring
 bees heavy with pollen
 worms ripped screaming from the earth
 leaves falling,
 ever falling

One day it will make its last flight
Perhaps it will make it home
 perhaps it will not

One thing will not falter:
 leaves ever falling,
 then mushrooms pushing their way up from the earth