

Spring 2018

Caverns: Kentucky Middle School Poetry (Volume 1, 2018)

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CAVERNS

Volume 1 2018

Kentucky Middle School Poetry



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∞ Cover illustration by Sue Ann Ferrell, and *CAVERNS* logo and editorial assistance by Rebecca L. Nimmo. Both are artists living Bowling Green, KY. ∞

Dear CAVERNS Readers,

We are very excited to present the first *CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry* collection! In this edition, you will find a collection of poems from middle school students throughout the Commonwealth, submitted during the month of April 2017. The hardworking editorial board sorted through more than 300 submissions to find the poems that spoke to us most powerfully. Poems were solicited online through *Kentucky Teacher* and selected educator email lists in the Commonwealth. Our hope is for *CAVERNS* to be an annual collection of poetry by Kentucky middle school students. Our criteria for submission for this first volume is available on the **Contributors** page (**page 89**).

The poems included in this volume represent openly expressed thoughts and emotions of middle school students. Selections were made based on the quality of the writing, and the editors did not discriminate based on content. Poems were submitted through the students' teachers, and parental permission was obtained before publication. Some poems treat disturbing topics that may be uncomfortable for some readers. We have provided a list of **resources (page 90)** that may be helpful to parents and teachers for initiating discussions on difficult issues that are part of our young people's world today. We also have included adapted **mini-lesson plans (page 94)** from *CAVERNS* associate editors Amy Jo Gibson and Kerry Hancock; you may find these useful for exploring poetry in your classrooms.

The editors would like to acknowledge the support of the Kentucky Reading Association and the Western Kentucky Reading Council of KRA, as well as the opportunity to make *CAVERNS* freely available through Western Kentucky University's TopSCHOLAR™. *CAVERNS* is organized into sections, roughly based on the themes expressed in the poems accepted for publication. Student authors retain copyright to their original work.

We hope you will appreciate, as much as we did, the variety, the ups and downs, twists and turns, and reflections of life as seen through middle school eyes.

Call for Poems for the next edition of *CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry* has already gone out to teachers! If you are interested in submitting a student or homeschooled middle grade child's poem, please contact the editors below.

Sincerely,

The Editors, *CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry*,

Email: kymspj@gmail.com or caverns.poems@gmail.com

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 - ◆ James Margarella (Drakes Creek Middle School)

Full Circle: Start-and-Stop Poems

Start and Stop Poem

by Aubrey Miller

Without words
There would be no communication
 No texting
 No music
The world would be as quiet as a mouse,
 Painless and peaceful
 No judging
 No books
Not even this poem I'm writing about
 Without words

Fat Is Just a Word

by Alexis Morton

Fat is just a word
which makes you feel bad
Someone calls you fat
And it makes you feel sad
No matter what you do
It always sticks around
So just let it go
And be safe and sound
Fat is just a word

Change

by Angelina Oleynik

Change can make you or it can break you
It plays with your emotions as if they are toys
 Bonds break, and bonds are made
 Friends become strangers
 Strangers become friends
 Distance fills your heart
It replaces those who used to take refuge in it
 But change isn't always bad
 Change can save you
 From the people who were toxic in your life
Change can renew you as if you born again
 Change can make you or it can break you

A Life Worth Living

by Bailey Miller

Gunshots.
That's all we heard
And then screams
The tweeting bullets sounded like birds
It was our duty to protect and serve
It was an expectation
To not lose our nerves
The little girl on that very day
Was walking around
I think she was astray
One shot. Two shots. Three then four
Most of our men's lives
Ended up hitting the floor
I aimed my gun
For the girl. For my wife. For our freedom
Most of our citizens were out having fun
While I closed my eyes
I thought of my family
If I didn't do this, they would most likely die
At least in the end it was a life worth living
I'm not giving in to them, I will defy
I stand up
Look at the sky
Is this really worth
The soldiers that die
I stand up in front of the soldiers and aim my gun
None of them
Decides to run
At least in the end it was a life worth living
Gunshots.

The Average Boy

by Barrett Olash

Oh he was an average boy,
For he read average books and had ok looks,
Oh he was an average boy.

Oh he was an average boy,
He never fell on his face cause oh what a disgrace,
Oh he was an average boy.

Oh he was an average boy,
When the class would clown, he'd always frown,
Oh he was an average boy.

Oh he was an average boy
When the kids would race at the track, he always ran at the back
Oh he was an average boy.

Oh he was an average boy,
He never took a chance, everyone just gave him a glance,
Oh he was an average boy.

When the boy moved away,
No one had anything to say,
Cause he was just an average boy.

You Are My Teacher

by Clayton Hasting

You are my teacher.
You are the spirit that keeps me going.
You are my pencil.
You are the warmth in the winter.
You are my icepack when I get bruised.
You are my parachute when I fall.
You are my motivation.
You are my teacher.



Ready

by Garrett Langford

I'm ready to be a grade older
I'm ready to ride the bus
I'm ready to meet my new teacher
(I hope she is ready for us)
I'm ready to write with pencils
I'm ready to make friends
I'm a little sad, but ready
Summer always ends,
I'm ready to be a grade older.

Lost Homework

by Katelynn Wynn

There was a time,
Where I lost my homework,
I thought I was going to be
In so much trouble, like
I stole something

I went to bed with
Butterflies in my stomach.
I woke up like a lazy hippo,
Not wanting to move.
I went to school anyway,

Hearing Bam! Boom!
And screams in my head at school.
When I got in class,
I told the teacher
"I lost my homework"

She was madder than
A bee with a broken hive.
She gave me a detention.
There was a time
Where I lost my homework.

Football Is Physical

by Jared Hibbard

Football is physical
Pushing your opponents to the turf,
On the green field,
The coach is giving the call,
Trying to get past that white line,
Making them have fewer points
As four quarters go by,
Refs make calls just like a seal's bark,
There are stupid things that will happen because,
Football is physical.

~~~~~

## YOU

*by Mackenzie Thompson*

You.  
You are the warm summer sun that warms my face.  
You are the soft breeze that wraps around my body.  
You are the crumbling sand that's so soft under my feet.  
You are the ocean that is forever with me.  
You are the palm tree that shields me.  
You are the bright blue sky  
So sweet and happy.  
You.

## Decisions

*by Macy French*

Making a decision is hard.  
It's like playing tug of war.  
Your brain pulls you one way.  
your heart pulls you another.  
You can gain the perspective of others,  
but sometimes that makes it worse.  
It takes over your brain.  
You spend every moment thinking and rethinking.  
"Is this the right way to go?"  
"Am I making a mistake?"  
You weigh your options.  
You flip a coin.  
Whatever you can do to decide, because  
Making a decision is hard.

## Start and Stop Poem

*by Makayla Gardner*

It's safe to compare you to whole galaxies  
The way that one minute  
You could be my whole world,  
Everything I look up to.  
One mistake, one "asteroid" to the stars  
Could make you crumble,  
Destroying every part of me.

Because you are every part of me,  
And you are a galaxy,  
A galaxy full of stars,  
Full of beauty,  
Full of rage,  
And full of everything good and bad.

One can't love a galaxy,  
They can only stop  
And stare at the beauty  
It shows on the outside.  
It's safe to compare you to whole galaxies

## You Are Someone

*by Tessalynn Patterson*

You are someone  
you're beautiful  
you're perfect  
you're crazy  
you're happy  
you're sad  
you are you

You are someone  
you're lovely  
you're humble  
you're kind  
you're good  
you're bad  
you are you

You are someone  
you're always someone and always will be  
even when you're lost  
you've crossed many struggles and made it this far  
you've always been afraid of the paths that you cross  
the struggle feels so real  
so painful  
so dead to you  
you're losing control, you feel the need to give up  
you always forgive way too easily  
you feel as if you're failing at everything  
you just want to grow wings and fly  
but you don't ...  
you keep pushing  
because you are you,  
always remember  
YOU ARE SOMEONE.



## Soccer

*by Victoria Warner*

### Soccer

Dribble, pass, shoot,  
Your team is your family,  
Moving quickly down the field.  
Your coach yelling orders,  
Like an army general at his men.  
Your parents cheering on the side lines,  
They are your biggest fans.  
My favorite thing to do.

### Soccer



## River

*by W. Seth Barber*

Drifting down a river  
No cares in the world  
Twigs and leaves  
Together  
Swirling and dancing  
Twisting and turning  
Drifting down a river

## Fade

*by Yasmin Key*

Fading.  
My hair grows darker.  
My skin is paler.  
I'm losing my color,  
all together.  
My eyes have dimmed.  
Memories forgotten.  
Emotions gone,  
bonds broken.  
I am a lost puzzle piece,  
to a life of happiness.  
Which has now turned to sorrow.  
I'm fading away.  
My color gone.  
Eyes lifeless and dim,  
Hair dark and skin pale.  
Monochrome.  
No one can save me now.  
For I am...  
Fading.

Haiku

**Under the Shades of Trees**

*by Aidan V.*

A soldier sleeps  
Under the shade of trees  
Ready to march off.

~~~~~

Cats

by Cody Humphrey

Sitting on my lap,
calm as can possibly be.
Have I found Heaven?

Spring

by Gitanjali Jaikumar

Pink flowers blooming
Watch as the leaves all turn green
See now, spring is here



The Sky

by Kileigh Schmidt

The surface of earth.
Different colors dancing across the sky.
Two sides of every day.

Nightlight

by Kyra Ennis

Down to sleep at night
But up by morning's first glance
For dawn's early light



Makeup

by Nolan C.

Makeup gives me hope
But sometimes I take it off
This helps me clean up

Homage: Poems in the Style of

Nature

by Amber Klein

A Poem Inspired by Henry David Thoreau

Nature knows no boundaries
She speaks so little words
But gave us everything she had
From flowers, trees, and birds

We hear her cries in waves that crash
Along our tainted shores
Her messages sprawled out in ash
From forests, there before

We see her pain and turn away
Denying what we've done
We claim that everything's okay
And break what once was one

High School

by Akhila Nadimpalli

Inspired by Carol Ann Duffy

High School.

I'm thinking about it, thoughts racing through my head
while sitting on the bus, summer has ended.

It's Tuesday morning.

Around me it's dark and quiet, everyone's sleeping.

Not me, I'm wondering how my first day will go.

What will my teachers be like?

I hope they are nice and helpful.

Will I see any of my friends in class today?

I want something to be familiar in this new, huge place.

What about supplies?

I hope we don't need many textbooks.

Will I get lost?

It's highly possible, with *those* complex staircases.

What will my Journalism classes be like?

I have never had them before.

I'm excited, this school is offering so many new opportunities!

I'm nervous, a new school to figure out and memorize.

I'm scared, a *whole* new level of responsibilities come with this.

Well, I know I will soon have all of my questions answered.

I chuckle, remembering how I asked myself those questions,
thought those exact same thoughts three years ago.

I start listening to music to calm myself down.

The darkness is helping as well.

The bus stops, in front of my new school.

There it is, Manual High School.

I get off, butterflies in my stomach.

I take a deep breath.

Though I am facing an uncertain future,
bring it on.

I am ready for this new experience,
High School.

My Brother

by Aniyah Thorpe

Celebrating e.e. cummings

There is a secret I shall keep
My brother, he sleeps with the vultures
His heart like a dull, heavy lead
For his lungs too pure and tiny for the dirt that surrounds him

For I want him to see the light again
But my father took him from me and I must know that
My God wanted his son back but I wanted my brother more
I lost the tug of war with my father above for the only brother I
would know

In his grave he stirs, longing for a sister to call his own
Will he ever meet us? His family that wants him more than life
itself?
Maybe I will see him in heaven

My brother, the one I long for most does not know I am here
My mother tells me he does not look over us
But I do not see why not

I watch for my brother every day
Hoping, praying that he will come back to us
As a baby or as what he is meant to be
But I know who is holding him up in the sky
I long for him to fall from the clouds into my hands so I can see him
My brother, the one I want most in the world is gone
Gone from this world, gone from this earth and gone from my life
I will see him after this life if I make it there in time
I hope his face is bright and shining like my sister's but I do not hope
I dream of him
I think of him
And I
Believe in him

Spring

by Anneliese Thomas

Inspired by "The Moon" by Henry David Thoreau

There is new life teeming everywhere
The flowers are in bloom,
You can see the bees anywhere
Even from your sunroom.

The cold harsh winter has worn away
In trade for the warm and forgiving spring
This is a sign that there is happiness underway,
Oh what wonders the world will bring!

The sun shines through the sky
And makes the creature's dance
And from the corner of your eye
You see that springtime is in advance.

Universe of Poetry

by Cody Humphrey

Inspired by Pablo Neruda

At this time I know but one thing,
I am sitting under a tree,
not far from Isla Negra,
writing these words.

The greens of the tree in summer,
the vibrant colors in Autumn,
the barren absence in the winter,
the resurrection in the spring.

The pure wisdom of the tree,
it has been there for all time.

Joyful I sit here,
Opening the Universe of Poetry.

(non) -Christian woman

by Devyn Williams

Inspired by Maya Angelou

"Children of God" wonder when my dress will die
It's too short and built to show my thighs
But when I start to tell them
They think I'm telling lies
It's not the "God I serve"
Whose daughter I am
Questioning
A questioning woman
That's me

I walk in a room
"Silence please"
And to a man
I worship at the hand saying
"Hallelujah to the almighty king"
If I don't they swarm around me
A hive of honey bees
I say
I don't know
Whose child I am
Not the god you
Say that I am
Unbelieving
An unbeliever woman
That's me

(continued)

(non)-Christian woman (continued)

by Devyn Williams

Inspired by Maya Angelou

Saints themselves have wondered
Why I am this way
Daughter of a preacher
Princess of the church
I try to show them
But they still can't see
Mother, Father I am not who you want
Me to be
The mess of it all
The twisted laws inside
The justification of miscommunication
Wondering
Wondering woman
That's me

Maybe you don't understand
Why i don't jump and praise
Or celebrate being inhumane
Towards those who are gay
Or black
Or different
Religion doesn't give the right
To judge
To hate
To withhold happiness
To you or me
So non christian
Non christian woman
That's me.

Ode to Nature

by Henry Marchal

Inspired by Henri David Thoreau

The most beautiful things
Are the natural ones
The ones that grow from the ground
Or the ones that can walk and talk

Nature is all natural
No buildings, no pollution
Nothing but silence and birds chirping
Or the occasional stream

The best things come from nature
The most vibrant
The most pleasant accord
All so lovely

Nothing interrupting
Yet still so much to do
All you have to do is listen and watch
It will be worth it

Summer Day

by Ikshitha Tippi

Celebrating e.e. cummings

[i carry my Summer Day] of which i enjoy
the wind blowing my hair back(the tree swooshing the branches back and forth)
for the sun is shining on me(brilliant heat erupting from the bright yellow sand)

[i carry my Summer Day] of which i enjoy
the yummy cone full of ice cream dripping down my hand(as delicious as it can be)
the beautiful blue body of water(as bright as the afternoon sky)
tickling my toes as the waves go passing by

[i carry my Summer Day] of which i enjoy
the rich aroma of the grilled food on the barbeque(the sound of the food sizzling)
the silky and fragile touch of new clothes makes me feel sophisticated
only to end with a beautiful night of stars shining with a warm campfire to chill around
during the midnight breeze(the stars reaching for the moon to shine upon me)

[i carry my Summer Day] of which i enjoy
[i carry my Summer Day] of which i enjoy

I Know How the Big Baby Feels

by Ikshitha Tippi

Celebrating Maya Angelou

A small baby creeps
On the floor like a mouse
And dreamlessly sleeps
While tranquil is the house
And later its cries
Wake the tired spouse
And the big baby sits quietly
Recollecting the memories.

Now comes the small baby bro
Walking to the place we call home
Although he was very slow
Watching the small baby roam
Wearing clothes full of rainbow
And the big baby sits quietly
Recollecting the memories.

The small baby learns how to eat
First with something smooth
Then with some lovely meat
But it needs its mother's words to soothe
Experiencing its first time in a suite
Enjoying its meaningful youth
And the big baby sits quietly
Recollecting the memories.

The small baby learns how to bike
Imagining it had wings
Later going on a hike
Discovering amazing things
Next, it makes a friend named Mike
And goes to school learning about kings and knights
And the big baby sits quietly
Recollecting the memories.

It Won't Hurt Me

by Katie Bollinger

Inspired by Maya Angelou

You may criticize me
You might cheat, lie, and steal
It won't hurt me
I will always heal

Does it satisfy you?
To try and tear me down
What am I going to do?
Nothing, it won't hurt me

Did you want me to fall?
Or cripple in shame
It won't hurt me
I'm not the one to blame

People say words can hurt, but not me
Are you appalled?
It won't hurt me
The words I've been called

I [i]

by Logan Kuhn

Inspired by e.e. cummings

My Eye for your [eye]
My Leg for your [leg]
your [heart] My Arm
My Hair My Feet
My Hands

My Heart ...[a wave]

[a look]

[a bless you]

I Give

[i take]

My Head, Arms, Legs, Organs, Love, Time

Everything for [nothing]

Place

by Lexi Shull

Celebrating Perder Sandra Cisneros

Where am I in this world
Do I belong amongst the Eagles
Or the Snakes over the Styx
Is this left ring my shackles and my silence

Who am I in this world
Holding identities as Raton holds Leon
The triangle has me at the bottom with the pobre
What am I

When They whistle, do I come
Am I Their esclavo tied with a ring
Or do I own myself
Where is my place

Where does my loyalty lay
I'm a child of the Green Lady in the harbor
Or wait, could I be
Walking with Santa Anna's army to the Alamo

I come from wealth
In my dreams, reality however has me
Come from pobreza
I come from where a penny is a cien pesos

In a world of seven billion
With millions of animals
With signs all around me telling me my place
Where am I

Images Fading

by Luke Stottman

Celebrating Alfred Lord Tennyson

Lost never to be seen clearly
Gone and never to return
I miss my photos dearly
Left empty only to yearn

Come out of the blue and surprised
Thy images left behind
Uncertain of its own demise
My soul and it are entwined

I shall not dwell on my sorrow
Memories will stay with me
Moving forward on the morrow
I start to fill up with glee

I realized all is not lost
Images floating though me
Everything dear comes with a cost
Memories are what I see

My Story

Mayukha Bhamidipati

Inspired by Maya Angelou

Hello, I want to make you smile
Mean something to the world that will last for a while.
I want to travel the land, reach for the stars,
Decipher the world, go near and far.
I want to be zany, I want to be smart,
I desire to be eminent, and follow my heart.
It is easier to say how we want to be than who we are.
Who am I *now*? *What is my avatar*?

I come from the shining rays of the sun,
I come from green meadows where the rabbits run.
I come from the skies, the land underneath,
Cheerful eyes and fearful dreams,
Insecurities that devour us all,
Hope and faith that allows us to stand tall.

I am not perfect, nor I ought to be
Cruel standards rule over our society.
I will write my tale in which I am not.
I choose to follow choice rather than ought.
I have a steady pulse, therefore I am able.
I can and I will write my own fable.

What is my story? Well, I don't know yet.
It's a journey that hasn't been permanently set.
But I create my destiny and I choose my fate.
I will show the world that I can be great.

I Keep Walking

by MeMe S.

Inspired by e.e. cummings

i hear the whispers(and the shouts)
The things people say(and the things they don't)
You're stupid
You won't go anywhere in life

i listen to the names(the names i so desperately hate)
But i keep walking(down the hallway)
Ignore them i say
(forget what they say)
Its not true, i know that
The things people say

Soon enough i keep walking(down the hallway)
And i walk into the arms of the one(the people)
That hold me and keep me happy
i kept walking

The Mountain and His Hiker

by Murari Srinivasan

Inspired by the style of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

An early morning hiking trip
Turns into a mistake
The wind is snapping like a whip
But sunlight it still snakes
Through the vines, and past the tree
Though clouds the sunlight we can still see

Over the river, and through the woods,
Scaling the mountainside
We cannot go down, I wish that we could
But at the ground the wind won't subside

The only place to go is up
The only goal I see
We climb the mountain heading up,
The Hiker and me

The Hiker guides me like a friend,
Towards the mountaintop
He says the wind will come to an end
When we reach the top

When him and I, we trudge along
We know the trail is cold and long
But the Hiker is my godsend
For he will lead me to the top
The magnificent end

Door

by Natalie Milliken

Celebrating "Mirror" by Sylvia Plath

I am painted and pristine. Not a speck of dust
For each day she comes to leave at dawn
And arrives back before dusk. The whooshing
Wind forces the pictures from her wall
Beloved fall onto the floor to be rescued at day's end.
But I am strong, no wind can displace me from my home
Not even the strike of the wall that holds me in place
Nor the deafening sound that follows.
My brass chains rattle against the wall, but they will hold.

Now I grow old and grey, someone's forgotten.
Mercuriality is not attractive and neither is that forlorn look.
The woman knows that fact because she arrived with a gift.
Salty dew tumble down her skin, pulled tight to her bones.
A crack ripples through the air, louder than the strike of the wall
Ever was. Speckles of red spray across my pristine wall, ruined.
The wrinkled chunk of intellect slams into my side and slowly slips
To the floor. New paint is always exciting but I am not
Of any hue but that of perfect, crisp snow.

Louisville

by Nimish Mathur

Inspired by "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg

Gateway City to the South,
Fall City, The Ville,
Home to the Nationally watched Horse Racing,
Falls of Ohio, Bluegrass, Derby City named by King Louis,
The up growing city:

Propaganda and influence has shown a dark and repulsive side of you, something that has
made you hidden from the light

I have told the rumors, seen the worst; the vandalism on the corner, the bullet in men
repeatedly but no solution

But with all the rumors, there were the truth for those who expressed negative thoughts
about

my home city, my home place, I have a question for them:

What is a perfect city? Take me on a journey to an ideal city where everyone is happy, safe,
laughing, and smiling

Where there is an enjoyable attraction on every corner. Does a city like this exist? With jobs
optimal for the lowest and highest class people?

More powerful than any attack, as bold as a bald eagle in full flight that is ready to
attack,

Fearless,

Daring,

Resolute,

Dauntless,

Broken, Repairing, broken,

Under the broken streets, rusted buildings, pollution everywhere,

Under the untruthful lies deep down and uncovered,

From under all the complaints in the veins, you get to the center where the city is full of joy
from all of

the society

Full of Joy!

Joyful despite the storms, broken streets, rusted buildings, or pollution but honored to
be Gateway to the South, Fall City, The Ville, Falls of Ohio, Bluegrass, and the
Derby City.

The Price of Independence

Pranav Kanmadikar

Inspired by "Truth" by Gwendolyn Brooks

I put my eyes on the face of one person
Chose to witness the life of one who is rather unlively
My uncle Charles, once bonded by chains,
Saw his own life as rather premature and untimely

Born with a bond—forced to serve a "superior"
Dreadful childhood,
Forced to cry on the inside, made him "frail" like the others
Emancipation came, but things were the same, later lived in a moneyless neighborhood

Once there were many of us,
Unfree
Now, there are more of our people,
Uncared for
Soon, however, there will be many more,
Understood at last
Oh, the thought of freedom, but that too comes with a price

Boundaries

by Sreevasa Vemuri

Inspired by "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams

so much depends upon

a boundary that
separates people

a line that
cuts a boulder

Reflections: Life Experiences

Until You're Gone

by Alissa Kaufman

No one cares until you're gone,
You have friends but they're only there off and on.
You start to wonder if anyone cares,
At school, they call you names and often send you glares.

You're tired of the bullying and the hatred,
Now your spirit is just faded.
A fake smile here and there,
Sometimes you feel like you're suffocating; running out of air.

You wonder if it would be better to end it all,
The voice screaming at you would finally stall.
The scars on your arms make you have to wear long sleeved shirts,
The only time you can get away is when you're in the town outskirts.

One day when you're in that spot,
You pull out the object and before you know it, your ears are ringing from the shot.
As blood soaks your chest, you start to smile a little,
No one will find you out here so you won't be saved by the disgusting hospital.

It was days before they found your body,
You were so bloody.
After you died they put up suicide prevention posters,
Maybe if they had been up before you would of had some closure.

Everyone in town talks about you as if they understood, even in salons,
But no one cared until you were gone.

Will You?

by Alissa Kaufman

The blade dances across my skin.
The velvet flows out and drips down.
Now that I am painted crimson,
Will you see me as beautiful?
Will you stop calling me names?
Will you stop abusing me?
When you see the life is gone from my eyes,

Will you love me?

~~~~~

## Images

*by Audrey Waldon*

Her mind intertwined with images seen long ago.  
Her reality became a false image she could not express nor show.  
She remembers her foes and the friends she gained.  
For all is fair in love and war. But she didn't know how much her heart tore.  
Her old friends gone foes.  
She didn't know which side she was on.  
And so  
Her heart was divided.  
Fixated on myths.  
And now she will suffer in the abyss of her own thoughts.

## Quiet

*by Ben Richardson*

Walking through the halls on a cold and quiet night  
Suddenly, a chill of fright.  
Dark, but somehow light.  
Suddenly I hear a scream,  
it feels like it's a dream.  
Oh wait, it is.  
On the floor I heard a creak,  
And then I heard the door squeak.  
I blinked my eyes and let out a sigh.  
Then it was Monday morning.

## Words

*by Callidora C.*

Words mean a lot to some people  
They can either change a person's life  
Or destroy whatever hope they have

sometimes words make a temporary mark  
Sometimes they make a permanent scar  
But all the same, they always do harm

They do harm to one person's mind, body, or soul  
They leave a person thinking until dawn  
Craving until dawn and hoping for down

Some people thinks that people are overrated  
How some quick phrases could leave a person at edge  
Some people step back from the edge  
Some people fall off that edge

But all the same  
Words are words  
And that's all they'll ever be

## Picture Perfect

*by Chloe D. Toon*

The familiar smell of paints wafts out of the room  
And draws her in.  
She sits on a stool,  
Facing a blank canvas  
And she begins to paint herself into a bittersweet world

Every stroke a relief, yet full of pain  
Every bottle calling to her, wanting to be first  
And every color she uses  
Greatens her thirst

She looks around her room  
Waiting to be mused by the rest of her paintings.  
Each portrait has been thoughtfully painted  
Resembling her idealistic picture perfect world,  
That she never thought she'd get.

Every painting can be seen as black and white, yet full  
of color.  
Every painting has a first and surname of her created  
characters.

She never had a disagreement  
In her little dictatorship  
But in her eyes it never seemed that way  
And soon her remedy became her poison

She's become too used to this alternate reality,  
Where she ruled and created her own happiness  
Not having to deal with the real world.  
She has had too much power for too long,  
Not knowing how to properly use it.

*(continued)*

**Picture Perfect** *(continued)*

*by Chloe D. Toon*

She has grown to love this world  
And her characters she has created  
She admires the way they live their life to please her  
She has pulled herself into

A world where people didn't have guns at the ends of their fingers,  
Or tongues that split into knives.

But there was something she forgot  
She forgot that her paintings were only picture perfect  
And that every image hides a secret  
She forgot about her shading and dimensions  
The kind that tells you there's space behind a wall, but  
not what's in it

She thought what she was doing was good,  
But like flies are attracted to fire,  
She burnt herself in the process.

She has been enslaved by her own friends,  
Persuaded she doesn't need the outside world.  
Captivated by her own creations,  
Driven by hate.

She turns mad by the thought of creating this dark place  
And every time she struggles to leave,  
She whispers to her paintings  
Her famous last words-  
"Just a little while longer"



## Shiver

by Devyn Williams

They asked me  
What makes you shiver at night  
And it wasn't the monsters under my bed  
But the monsters in my head

The ones that scream  
The loudest  
The longest  
The most life filled  
screams

They asked me  
What makes you shiver at night  
And it wasn't the monsters under my bed  
But the monsters in my head

*PillsPillsPills*

You NEED MORE pills  
The voices say

*MoreMoreMore*

I shiver and say

1...2...3...4

One more

Then I'm out the door

The door of death and destruction  
That holds me back  
That makes me shiver

They asked me  
What makes you shiver at night  
They got their answer  
But they never asked why  
I shivered at night

*(continued)*

**Shiver** (continued)

by Devyn Williams

*HormonesHormonesHormones*

They always said  
Screaming  
You need  
*PillsPillsPills*  
Just for a little balance

The ones that are  
Supposed to help  
Soon sounded  
JUST  
LIKE  
the  
Ones that hurt  
most  
So I do as told and take  
More  
*PillsPillsPills*  
And soon I slip past that door

After I was gone  
They asked me  
Why did it make you shiver at night  
TOO LATE  
I wanted to scream  
But i couldn't  
That scream, just like me  
Was long gone  
They want to know why  
Tell them because of the  
Cruel people  
And their Cruel ways  
In this cruel life

(continued)

**Shiver** (continued)

by Devyn Williams

So child I am here  
To warn you  
*LessLessLess*  
I am here to stay  
So put down those  
*PillsPillsPills*

For I am here to help you deal with the  
Cruel people  
With their cruel ways  
In your cruel world  
Before it's too late

I will ask you  
What makes you shiver at night  
And I will ask why it makes you shiver at night  
Because I want to know the relief

A  
*WhyWhyWhy*  
Can bring  
I will be here to Shiver  
With you  
For you  
So you aren't alone with those monsters  
Like I was

Don't shiver  
For I am here

## Burnt

*by Emma Huang*

Before knowing you, nothing was ablaze  
I gave you my heart, in return, a game.  
'I only love you', is what you would claim,  
To receive my soul, my love, and my praise

You had it all, my essence and my mind  
Instead of building, you wanted to tear  
Instead of focus, your mind was elsewhere  
I am the artwork that you left behind

Letters in the trash and flowers dried up  
The flame we once had; it is now long gone  
Of you, I'm no longer dependent on  
'A childish fool', you told me to grow up

Your sparkling eyes which I once admire  
Your tender hands, which held my very heart  
Charred beyond belief; it's now time to part  
I was burnt by you, screams of a fire

## Two Way Road

*by Emma Huang*

In the utter darkness of my mind,  
You had saved me once again  
Then in the desperate act of being kind,  
You broke the heart you tried to mend

In the midst of silence piercing my ear,  
My love, you were the song  
But keep in mind that it takes two to hear,  
And you had me strung along

Your lies twisted my very soul,  
Your deception messed with my heart,  
Your cheats soon took their dreadful toll,  
Yet, from you, I still can't be apart.

When I was stranded alone at sea,  
You were the boat that took me home,  
But when the words in my mouth were a plea  
Your love mirrored the broken towers of Rome

I'd fight for you, and only you,  
Sharper words and wasted time  
But I couldn't see in my peripheral view,  
That you were my one and sole crime

I was given a hundred reasons to love,  
Then a thousand more to hate  
Had a million things of yours to get rid of,

But a billion signs you were my soul mate

You were the water that saved me  
From the drought of missing you  
But just remember, baby:  
Water can drown people too.

## Movies

*by DJ Miller*

Movies make me excited.  
I like watching them.  
Sometimes the warm cozy couch is a movie to me sometimes.  
The popcorn is delicious with all of that butter.



## Dreams

*by Faith M.*

What is the difference between you and me –  
who have the same ambitious dreams?  
You dismiss them as fantasies  
but I know someone will succeed  
and I will make it me.

## **Eliana**

*by Gitanjali Jaikumar*

A glance at first sight was enough to say  
That you would be mine  
Without you I would feel astray  
You're the one in my heart that stands and shines

Your lips a hint of pink  
Your eyes shine and shimmer blue  
I see you walk by, your eyes flutter and blink  
I'm falling for you, yet you have no clue

The way you walk  
The way you laugh  
The way you talk  
Splits my heart in half

What I have for you is passion  
You're like a million doves

## Slits

*by Hannah Hux*

Slits on my wrist,  
Slits on my legs,  
I think, but it's all in my head.  
I wanna do it, but I'm scared,  
Think about all the tears.

Scars on my body  
Scars everywhere  
Permanent marks

On my arms,  
On my legs,  
Marking my pain  
My tears are like rain  
Dripping on my slits.

What is all this?  
I'm misunderstood  
With all these slits.



## Live

*by Jayden Wood*

Live life to the fullest  
No regrets  
One day there will be a time  
When you want to regret

Time flies  
Mistakes will be made  
Your heart will break  
Your stomach will ache

Life's hard, don't fold  
Stay strong or you'll rot like mold  
Don't ever stop  
Achieve your dream

One day people will leave  
People will tell you lies  
You'll hear goodbyes but don't cry  
Don't be weak, or you'll die young

Live life, be happy  
Then life's guaranteed  
If you follow this step then you'll succeed  
"Live Life To The Fullest"

## Darkness into Light

*by Julia Hendricks*

Darkness into light  
I have struggled so much  
I'm still learning to love and not hate  
Think not fight, live not die,  
It is hard but I have support.

My friends, my family,  
They cheer me on from the sidelines,  
They stand by me,  
But sometimes it's not enough, though,  
Sometimes the darkness comes back,

They pull me back, and hold me close,  
The darkness doesn't come back so often any more,  
The light and warmth hold the cold and dark at bay,  
I'm grateful for it, I love them all for it,

They are teaching me love, compassion and hope,  
I teach them reality, thriving, perseverance,  
Together we are teaching each other,  
How to turn,  
Darkness into light.

## Death Walks Among Us

*by Juliette C.*

Do you ever feel like someone is next to you,  
But when you turn there's no one?  
Do you ever hear a sound nearby,  
But no one knows where it came from?  
Sometimes I see the person that's not there,  
Sometimes I know where the sound came from,  
A shadow or ghost hiding from you,  
It sneaks up and rips from you your happiness,  
It makes the sane, go insane,  
It makes the happy, into the depressed,  
It's what causes people to take their own lives,  
It's what makes this life a hell on earth,  
Death walks besides us,  
Next to us, it sucks us from ourselves,  
Leaves us broken and cold,  
Death walks among us

## *Tears*

by Juliette C.

*My  
tears  
stream  
down my  
face. I imagine  
him walking away  
from me. He disappears  
and I am as still as a tree.  
Alone the tears fall as  
if in a race.*

*He  
is gone.  
He is moving  
on. To the next  
life, whatever it may  
be. He's leaving me here  
to grieve. To let my tears  
fall. To never forget,  
the love I had.*

*A  
tear is  
not a bad  
thing. It shows  
love. Tears are our sign,  
that we can't just forget or  
move on. Because when we do,  
we forget or leave behind ourselves.  
So, let your tears fall. Let other's  
tears fall. There's a reason behind  
each and every tear that wets  
a face. There is a love  
in every tear.*

## The Old Me

*by Juliette C.*

There used to be a girl who didn't cry,  
Her feelings matched the sun in the sky,  
Everyday she spread her smile,  
But her happy mood only lasted for a little while,

Soon came a person who wanted to hang around,  
Who many people screamed at their sound,  
No one wanted death as a friend,  
Unless it was the right time for their end,

Death took her other friends away,  
They never saw another day,  
And soon her smile became a frown,  
And wailing was her only sound,

This all happened on her birthday,  
And now she hardly ever gets to stay,  
But somewhere you can find her,  
Deep inside I can feel her stir

## **I Had a Dog**

*by Katelynn Wynn*

I once had a dog,  
Who was as black as  
The blank dark sky.  
He blended in at night.

He was bigger than a hippo.  
But I loved him,  
His name was Bro,  
Cause he was everyone's best bro.

Bro had the biggest smile.  
It looked like a growl,  
But it wasn't at all.  
It was his puppy smile.

Bro had red parts on him,  
Like red stars in  
The dark night sky.  
It was different in a good way.

I miss him much,  
But he's in a better place now.  
Now I have a brown pup.  
Who is just like Bro.

## Emotional Pain

*by Kaylee Kapp*

Forgiven and forgotten,  
That's not how words work.  
Wounds will heal but words leave hurt.

A word can be a ghost,  
Following you around.  
Leaving you upset, it's a sad sad sound.

Something someone once said,  
Stuck inside your head.  
A ghost from your past,  
You hoping to forget at last.

Words can follow you to your grave,  
Affecting how you behave.  
You just want to live your life,  
Too scared to even go near a knife.

A memory hoping to be forgotten,  
Mean things said far too often.  
It should be a crime,  
But no one wants to pay the time.

Emotional pain,  
All that hard work down the drain.  
Because these words still remain,  
Only because one **person** said **one thing....**

## Fake Looks

by Mayukha Bhamidipati

Fake laws, fake money, fake news, fake hooks  
Fake rights, fake freedom, fake wars, fake books.

Dazed and confused by the search of sincere  
Flattened by 'alternative facts' and frontiers

Eyeing the truth through the uncorrupted window pane  
Cringing at the sight of one's own self-gain

Morality and humanity is tough to decipher  
Do we purposely do wrong and pay the pied piper?

Even after knowingly wrongdoing, one pays  
Commonly with wealth, reputation, and bouquets

They tell us 'trust no one' and 'looks can be deceiving'  
Then what do we *really see if 'seeing is believing'?*

Perception and judgment differ quite a bit  
We all have power to look past the hypocrite

Fake laws, fake money, fake news, fake hooks  
**Fake tears, fake nature, fake truth, fake looks**



## Being Different Means

*by Mlelwa Dieudonne*

i am less than  
but no more than  
anything  
i am taken away from  
everything  
it means that i am not whole  
i have no togetherness  
i am completely broken  
in pieces  
an outsider.  
lacking something.  
i am not part  
not a member or element  
not full .  
not a whole  
not complete  
that's what i am  
but i will not cry  
about it because  
i am fine,  
even though it hurts  
i am fine

## The Day

*by Nina Bradley*

I stare at the monotone teacher  
speaking of history and repetition  
as I slouch over my desk, placing my head in my arms  
wishing I was somewhere else  
my tiredness from the morning overwhelms me and slumber  
overpowers my will  
although sometimes I wish I don't wake up.  
humiliation from the class  
*Should've gone to bed early*

Tears fall, because I cannot sleep  
when I am always night-dreaming  
with half-lidded eyes  
wishing for fairy tales  
for people, places, emotions that no longer exist  
that my heart can no longer handle

I am on the bus  
staring out of a transparent window  
much like myself  
the bus stops  
and it's my turn to leave  
I escape  
the wheeled box drives away  
and I wait for the next bus  
because if history really repeats itself  
taking a new bus to *somewhere*  
with a home sick head  
will be much better  
than returning to the *home*  
that is only a house.

## The Evolution of Exile

*by Olivia Bohler*

We created our bodies  
We created our words  
We created our spears  
We created our atlatls  
We created our boomerangs  
We created our bow and arrow  
We created our daggers, knives, swords  
We created our bombs  
We created our guns  
We created our warships  
We created our torpedoes, missiles  
We created our weaponry  
We created our defense against all enemies, all evil  
But in a way we created our own

## 65 Minutes

*by Reagan Childers*

Tick tock  
You treat them wrong  
Then flip when they trip into a downward spiral  
Gone but your veteran roast video still went viral

Oh here we go  
Now begins my 65 minutes  
For 65 minutes you bear with me  
Oh wait now it's down to 50  
Tick tock the clock goes in my head  
Till I can be with my brothers again

They were such good men  
But that's in the past  
I am in the present  
To tell what you do is not funny

It's like a medication  
Side effects ragin'

May cause

**Anxiety**

Depression

Suicidal thoughts or tendencies

But the may turns into will

And the will turns into gone

The gone turns into a reset of the suicidal 65 minutes on a poor veterans clock

Tick tock my time is up

## The Final Shot

*by Sarah Baker*

One man, one woman sit on a park bench,  
staring across to the lake beyond  
He reminisces with her of years  
that have already passed and gone  
The children they've raised  
The joy they're gained, all while  
forgetting the pain they each faced

He was a soldier, racing away from home  
Off to the frontlines, scared and alone  
He served his country with honor and pride  
Keeping up his fighting stride

She stayed at home as he fought back  
and time seemed to lack  
Six months dragged by till she finally  
spotted his ship's flag waving broad in the sky  
The crowd cheered and cheered,  
but she only found herself drowning in tears.

He tells her stories; stories of fear, regret,  
and miserable heartbreak and holds  
her tight to hide his face, for now  
he was the one with emotions like lace.

They wed a week later and stayed happy  
for ever after. They had a daughter and  
two sons, whom they provided both care  
and love

Now it's been 68 years since that  
ship docked, yet their love cannot  
and will not be lost  
The woman sits quietly in a lonely  
hospital room, watching her husband  
in dark gloom

*(continued)*

**The Final Shot** *(continued)*

*by Sarah Baker*

Ten days forward, she receives the  
news and flees her way back to  
the old room. There she waits as  
she did before; by his bedside  
as he closes his eyes

Family joins, weeping, all in mourn  
They lay the soldier down in the  
ground, freshly torn

In the back row, a little girl sits  
listening to the woman  
She sees her pain and walks out  
to the aisle just as it begins to rain

They fold the flag and say their dues  
and the little girl looks down to pray  
for the woman colored blue

She wipes the tear from her face  
and says, "Papaw's in a better  
place." The woman and the child  
support each other as the hands  
draw to a salute ...  
... and the guns fire

Three men

Seven ... shots

Twenty-one goodbyes

Two People

Seven

Tears

Two forever goodbyes

## Weekends

*by Tanner Jones*

Weekends

I wake up in the morning to a fresh hot breakfast  
Bacon eggs sausage apple juice  
Then I get dressed.  
Chest protector neck protector boots  
Helmet gloves.  
Then I start my dirt bike.

Then I practice for 3 hours on the 6 mile trial.  
I work on enduro, speed, holeshot.  
My favorite is enduro and holeshot.  
Holeshot is where you do a cold start.  
Enduro is where you ride over logs you can't  
Even hug the whole thing.

Then we have a five hour trail ride.  
We have hill climbs and follow the leader.  
My favorite is hill climb and follow the leader.  
Follow the leader is where one person leads  
And you follow.

Lunch is my favorite time.  
Because I get a real Mexican burger.  
We just make what we want.  
Dad fixes steak my sister fixes a no meat meal.  
Then we sit down and eat.

The end of the ride is the best.  
We ride as fast as we can.  
But never leave anybody behind.  
We get home then we go on the roof.  
Then we watch the sun set.

## **All My Life**

*by Vaishnavi Sunkara*

All my life I've wanted fame  
I've wanted to be known,  
To be recognized

All my life I've wanted to do good  
I've wanted to make a difference  
To make change

All my life I've wanted to be rich  
I've wanted people begging to meet me  
To have everything

These things are said everyday,  
By those who want nothing but greed  
By those who are arrogant and selfish  
A real smile, a purpose, and hope,  
Is all I've needed, all my life.



## Ruminations: Nature & the World

### Bubble

*by Benjamin Pacyga*

Now I have a  
protective bubble all  
around me. It  
surrounds and protects  
me. Nothing can ever  
hurt me. Nothing  
can ever touch me.  
In here, I am safe.  
In here, it is calm.  
Now I can brave the  
storm. With its help.

## What a World We Live in

*A Mildly Edgy Poem from the Procrastinated Mind of Pyzik*

*by Alex Pyzik*

As I was writing this poem, I began to procrastinate,  
As boys tend to do, by a matter of fate.  
I began to think and ponder within,  
And then I thought, "What a World We Live In"

What a World we Live in,  
Where diplomacy seems like an afterthought,  
With war being our first option,  
Living many at risk with the battles we fought.

What a World we Live In,  
Where we rely on Religion  
Faith giving us purpose,  
Sending many of Us on a mission.

Do you see what we're achieved here?  
We've turned the Consumer into the means of Production!  
While we turn a blind eye,  
Never noticing the key malfunction.

It's understandable,  
People turn to religion and wealth, in the age of now.  
But please believe me,  
It seems like the world is onto much more concrete faiths now.

We seem to forget the pleasantries,  
Where we forgo terms of the past,  
As we turn to the future,  
Though those times may be our last.

*(continued)*

**What A World We Live In** (continued)

*A Mildly Edgy Poem from the Procrastinated Mind of Pyzik*

*by Alex Pyzik*

You have to rob Paul to pay Peter,  
There is no other way.  
At least, that's what it seems like,  
In the years of today.

Corruption in it's simplest form,  
Which, for some reason, we have grown fond,  
Money makes the world go round, they say,  
But what happens when the money's gone?

I know some may be confused,  
I understand, so was I,  
All it took was to take some steps back,  
And "open your thinking eye"

MY whole point here today,  
Is not to fearmonger,  
But rather to make you guys think,  
I hope to give you time to ponder.

What a World we live in,  
While disease tears across the world,  
And we seem to just ignore it,  
And our politicians brows become furrowed.

What a world we live in,  
As objective facts become reduced to spam,  
As I address these topics,  
In an 8th grade poetry Slam.

## Broken Stars

*by Chloe D. Toon*

My soul is a night sky  
Black as hate  
Driven by love  
Blemished with stars  
When people make it through the darkness,  
They head for those stars  
That look just like holes to them  
They stretch the sides of my stars and climb right through  
them  
Finding themselves in obsolete space white as this page.  
So they graffiti my walls with words of their own  
Leaving before I have the chance to object

## Raft

*by Chloe D. Toon*

I've been sitting on this raft awhile  
Floating off at sea,  
With the sun beating down on me  
Happily

I've been alone awhile

Floating off at sea  
So I think of all my friends that are sitting here with  
me

The fishes smile at me

As they swim on by  
And the moon reminds me not to cry

At night the stars and clouds surround me

With the comfort of a blanket  
And the water ripples tell me  
That everything's alright

There is no one who can talk to me

*(continued)*

**Raft** (continued)

*by Chloe D. Toon*

So I whisper to the air  
The breeze responds to me  
And tells me what i'd like to hear

Birds call out  
Singing me their song  
Gliding through the air  
Showing me I can be strong

I've been riding this raft for a very long time,  
On a very big ocean,  
With a very blue sky.

Things are kinda lonely  
On my really cold ocean,  
And my very small raft

But things are gonna change sometime  
When my very small raft reaches some

very big land

## **I'm Free**

*by Conner Dennison*

I'm free as a bluebird in the sky  
Like it, I, too, will fly  
My days are numbered, but I feel free  
Even now with this disease inside of me

I've got scars that can't be seen  
I'm the shadow of the man I used to be  
Like that blue bird in sky  
One day I will die

With little time left on earth  
I'll soon be free from this curse  
I'm free as a bluebird in the sky

## The World

*by Faith M.*

The world bellows, "Take. Take. Take."  
And so, we do.

And people starve  
and die.  
Diseased,  
They lie.  
We hear their cries  
and bow our heads,  
but they don't hear our sighs  
or the acknowledgements we said.



## Memory Tree

*by Hadley Corley*

In the country-side forest is where I will be  
High off the ground, climbing a tree.  
I see a juicy red apple, and I take a bite.  
I walk along one branch, while holding others tight.  
When I look around, leaves are all that I see.  
I wonder who else has made memories such as these.



## Baseball

*by Javon Clark*

Standing at bat is like taking a random test  
Hitting the ball stings like a shot at the doctors  
The bat is as tough as a nail  
When I hit the ball I ran like lightning  
I ran as fast as day  
I could smell the food from a million miles away  
I could imagine myself biting into the hotdog  
The Hamburgers, hotdogs, and pickles were heaven  
I wish I could quit the game and just eat all day  
The grass was as green as green beans  
The dirt was so fresh that it didn't look real  
The field was an irregular shape  
The fences were as tall as a skyscraper  
The passes were as fast as a rocket  
I couldn't see the ball zooming through  
The ball was going a million mph  
The baseball was chasing me forever.

## Wind over Water

*by Jessica Higdon*

It was one of  
Those windy days.  
But at the lake,  
There were no waves.

Come out to play,  
On this windy day,  
To run through the field  
Of sweet, golden hay.

Or, if you avoid the burrs,  
We can climb through the forest  
That smells of pine sap  
And the leaves of firs.

Soon, we will climb  
The gray mountain high  
To see the whole lake,  
And touch the sky.

And while we play,  
On this windiest of days,  
That tranquil lake  
Will still have no waves.

## The Woods

*by Jessica Higdon*

Towers stretching towards the sky  
Litter the ground with their forgotten beauty.  
The sky is blue,  
The ground orange.  
And in between:  
Rough, hard bark.

Cold is there:  
The cold of a forgotten time and place,  
With the sadness of a lost age.  
It haunts this area  
With a fog,  
A cold blanket to cover the world.

Oh!  
Rising from the mist:  
A fortress of stone,  
Built of Earth's bone.  
Reaching high and stooping low  
Walls of strength and power  
That Time was eager to devour.  
Oh, the sorrow,  
Of a glory  
Fallen down.

## Rainy Day

*by Katen Stratton*

Raindrops falling,  
Lightning striking,  
Thunder booming.

Plans are cancelled,  
Tears spill,  
The gloomy children sit and wait,  
For a time to come,  
When the rain,  
                  no longer,  
                                  falls.

## The Rope

*by Katen Stratton*

When will people realize what they say matters?  
Bad dreams live in my sleep,  
Negative thoughts live in my mind,  
I never get dry air,  
I'm always being suffocated by the noiseless shadow of dread.

When will people realize what they say matters?  
The name-calling, the whispering,  
When will it stop?  
I can't escape the laughter,  
The hatred,  
There is only one way.

I walk to my closet,  
Look at the familiar chair,  
And step up.

The braided rope just hangs there,  
Its twisted body ready to take me,  
I put my head in,  
The tears rolling down my face,  
And I jump,  
Thinking one last thought.

When will people realize what they say matters?

## Everything

by Kathleen Bauer

There is one word that says everything: everything.  
How can ten small letters hold such power –  
the power to stand for billions and billions  
of *things* in the universe?

But what does *everything* really mean?  
That is, what is the definition of *thing*?  
Does it only apply to inanimate objects,  
like tables and chairs,  
or can it be something abstract,  
like love, hope, or joy?  
And is it only non-living,  
like a door or a wall,  
or can it be a person or animal?  
Or do you just have to decide what *thing means*?

And what about what isn't a *thing*?  
Is there a word for every *thing*  
and every non-thing combined?  
Is it *every molecule*? *All-imaginable*?

Really, why does one word cause so much trouble?  
And is *trouble* a thing?  
You can touch its effects,  
but trouble itself is not tangible  
or non-living.

And if something is only part of your imagination,  
is it non-living?  
Or is it its own category?  
And is it even a *something*?  
That is, is it a *thing*?

Why does everything,  
that is, *every molecule* or *all-imaginable*,  
keep coming back to this idea of a *thing*?  
If it causes such a debate,  
why is *thing* a word?  
Why is *everything* a word, too?

## Days

*by Kileigh Schmidt*

A good morning sunrise.  
Warm and comfortable.  
Running clouds move through the day.  
Chasing each other so far away.  
Blue and white paint brushed across the sky;  
Only for dark nights to wash the day.



## Nights

*by Kileigh Schmidt*

A good night sunset.  
Warm and comfortable.  
Stars coming out.  
Floating about.  
The oval-shaped moon;  
Lighting the night.

The surface of earth.  
Different colors dancing across the sky.  
Two sides of everyday.

## The Morning

*by Nina Bradley*

The morning sun  
shines ever so brightly  
in my half-lidded eyes  
pouring in from the transparent  
window much like myself  
my cello rests against the wall  
contorted with my sadness  
the music is contaminated  
with its musician's misery  
so I trace its edges in my mind  
as I drown in my pillow  
drenched with my own tears  
and the morning sun  
shines ever so slightly  
in my dark room  
pouring into my heart  
from the exit—  
the only opening  
that's ever used.



## Society

*by Sean Bray*

Society couldn't get any worse,  
Growing up, society seemed so perfect,  
It was so far from that,  
Everyone seemed so happy,  
No one cared about what many people said,  
I didn't know that much about our society until now,  
It's slowly falling apart,  
We are slowly falling apart,  
No one cares and that's why society is falling,  
We are so lost in social media we forget to care,  
We are so worried about what people will say and think  
That we can't grow from what we are now,  
We are lost but don't want to be found,  
Our society has neglected different genders,  
Our society has neglected our citizens' sexuality,  
Our society has embraced homophobia,  
Our society has caused people to turn to suicide as a solution,  
Society couldn't get any worse.

## Spring Evening

*by Cody Humphrey*

Something beautiful lies  
in a spring evening:  
the breeze in the air,  
the light chirping of crickets,  
the pinkish-blue sky.

As the Tree waves its arms in the wind,  
I stare into the void,  
I question my place in the universe,  
I wonder why I'm here.

Along comes the glimmer,  
of the first star of the evening,  
and suddenly I know, we are here for times like this.

## Contributors

The editors of **volume 1** of *CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry* are extremely grateful to the talented students, dedicated teachers, and proud parents who made this first volume possible. Poems were solicited during National Poetry Month, April 2017, by notices sent to **Kentucky Teacher** and selected education email lists. Poems were contributed by students through their classroom teachers and were selected from these Kentucky schools:

- Bullitt Lick Middle School
- Conner Middle School
- Farristown Middle School
- Glasgow Middle School
- Hebron Middle School
- Leestown Middle School
- Meyzeek Middle School
- Owensboro Catholic Campus 4-6
- Royal Spring Middle School

The poems appearing here were selected for publication in this first volume of *CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry* after extensive editorial board review, using a **rubric** adapted from **Christine Lewy** (2001). Criteria for publication were as follows:

- Original poetry only. No fanfiction or found poetry will be accepted.
- First publication (not previously published, even on any form of social media).
- Poems should convey a central idea, not just stream of consciousness.
- The editors encourage experimentation with established poetic forms, including original song lyrics.
- Submissions must be typed on accompanying forms.
- Original photographs or illustrations are permitted and must be submitted in .jpeg, .jpg, or .png format. Reduce the size of the original image in a photoediting program.
- Obscenities, offensive language, biased or bigoted slurs are not permitted.
- Maximum of 3 poems to be submitted per student poet, per issue.
- Poems must be submitted using the enclosed form through classroom teachers.
- Parent/guardian permission required before accepted poems will be published.

Poems for the 2019 edition of *CAVERNS* will be accepted April 1-30, 2018. Email the editors for more information: [kymspj@gmail.com](mailto:kymspj@gmail.com) or [caverns.poems@gmail.com](mailto:caverns.poems@gmail.com).

## Resources for Students, Families, & Educators

### Information for At-Risk Youth and Families

- Bridges4Kids: Building Partnerships between Families, Schools, and Communities: <http://www.bridges4kids.org/At-Risk.html>
- Centerstone/Uspiritus (formerly Seven Counties): Not-for-profit community-based mental health services. Kentucky child and family behavioral health: <https://centerstoneky.org/children-families/>
- Clark, A. Resources to help your teen deal with harmful behavior and other risks. Understood.org. <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/teens-tweens/risky-behavior/resources-to-help-your-teen-deal-with-harmful-behavior-and-other-risks>
- Kentucky Department of Education Bullying Statistics: <https://education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Bullying-Statistics.aspx>
- Kentucky Department of Education: Suicide Awareness: <https://education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Suicide-Prevention-and-Awareness.aspx>
- Kentucky Horse Park/Central Kentucky Riding for Hope Equine Troop: <https://khpfoundation.org/programs/education/khp-ckrh-equine-troop>
- Louisville At-Risk Youth External Agency Funding resources: <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/external-agency-funding-eaf-youth-services>
- OutwardBound. Intercept: Getting Stronger Together: Intercept Expeditions for Struggling Teens and Young Adults: <https://www.outwardbound.org/intercept/intercept/>
- PBS. KET. Cry for help. Teenage mental illness and suicide. List of links (2009; links may be out date). <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/cryforhelp/featured/resources-hotlines-and-web-sites-for-parents/8/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: Adolescents: <https://www.sprc.org/populations/adolescents>
- The Bureau for At-Risk Youth. <http://www.at-risk.com/>. Publishes character education curriculum and materials.
- The Mentor Network: Youth and Families at Risk: <http://thementornetwork.com/who-we-serve/youth-and-families-at-risk/>
- United States Department of Agriculture: National Institute of Food and Agriculture: Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grant program: <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/children-youth-and-families-risk-cyfar>; University of Kentucky CYFAR grants: <https://hes.ca.uky.edu/content/children-youth-and-families-risk-cyfar>

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## Resources for Students, Families, & Educators (continued)

### Creative Resources

- George Ella Lyon official website: <http://www.georgeellalyon.com/>
- Kentucky Arts Council: <http://artscouncil.ky.gov/> and Creative Commonwealth blog: Building Vibrant Online Communities <https://creativecommonwealth.ky.gov/>
- Kentucky Poet Laureate 2017-18: Frederick Smock: <http://artscouncil.ky.gov/KAC/Showcasing/Poet.htm>
- Kentucky State Poetry Society: <http://www.kystatepoetrysociety.org/>. Poetry Contests page: <http://www.kystatepoetrysociety.org/contests>
- Kentucky Writes: Authors of the Bluegrass State: <http://libguides.uky.edu/c.php?g=223305&p=3202347>
- Kentucky's "Where I'm From": A Poetry of Place: <http://artscouncil.ky.gov/KAC/Vibrant/WhereFromAbout.htm> and Creative Commonwealth September 2015 blogpost by George Ella Lyon: <https://creativecommonwealth.ky.gov/2015/09/>
- The Affrilachian Poets: <http://www.theaffrilachianpoets.com/>
- VSA of Kentucky (Very Special Arts of Kentucky): Arts inclusion projects in Kentucky schools: <http://vsartsky.org/>
- Young Authors Greenhouse (Louisville): <https://www.youngauthorsgreenhouse.org/>

### Teaching Poetry

- Eudtopia: (Re)creating Poets: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/re-creating-poets-joshua-block> and Five Poetry Teaching Tips for New Teachers: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/poetry-teaching-tips-new-teachers-lisa-dabbs>
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/ReadWriteThink: Poetry Lesson Plans (all grades): <http://www.ncte.org/lessons/poetry> and Lesson Plans Discovering Poetic Form and Structure Using Concrete Poems: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/discovering-poetic-form-structure-211.html>
- National Education Association (NEA): Bringing Poetry to the Classroom, Grades 6-8: <http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/bringing-poetry-to-the-classroom-grades-6-8.html>
- Poets.org: Materials for Teachers: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/materials-teachers>
- Poetry Archive Lesson Plans: <https://www.poetryarchive.org/lesson-plans/age-11-14>
- Reading Rockets: 10 Ways to Use Poetry in Your Classroom: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/10-ways-use-poetry-your-classroom>

## Selected Poetry Books

- A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms*, by Paul B. Janeczko
- A Poke in the I*, by Paul B. Janeczko
- A Maze Me: Poems for Girls*, by Naomi Shihab Nye
- Are You an Echo?: The Lost Poetry of Misuzu Kaneko*
- Black Girl Magic: A Poem*, by Mahogany L. Browne
- Booked*, by Kwame Alexander
- Bravo!: Poems about Amazing Hispanics*, by Margarita Engle
- Bronx Masquerade*, by Nikki Grimes
- Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson
- City of One: Young Writers Speak to the World*, edited by Collette Dedonato
- Cool Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Growing Up Latino in the United States*, by Lori Marie Carlson
- For Teenage Girls with Wild Ambitions and Trembling Hearts*, by Clementine von Radics
- Get Lit Rising: Words Ignite. Claim Your Poem. Claim Your Life*, by Diane Luby Lane and the Get Lit Players
- God Got a Dog*, by Cynthia Rylant
- God Went to Beauty School*, by Cynthia Rylant
- Hate that Cat*, Sharon Creech
- Here in Harlem: Poems in Many Voices*, by Walter Dean Myers
- I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine: Poems for Young Feminists*, by Carol Ann Duffy
- Inside Out and Back Again*, by Thanhha Lai
- Keesha's House*, by Helen Frost
- Laughing Out Loud, I Fly: Poems in English and Spanish*, by Juan Felipe Herrera
- Leave This Song Behind: Teen Poetry at Its Best*, ed. by Stephanie H. Meyer, John Meyer, Adam Halwitz, and Cindy Spertner
- Love that Dog*, by Sharon Creech

(continued)

## Selected Poetry Books (continued)

- Many-Storyed House: Poems*, by George Ella Lyon
- Poems from Homeroom: A Writer's Place to Start*, by Kathi Appelt
- Poetry Matters: Writing Poetry from the Inside Out*, by Ralph Fletcher
- Poet X*, by Elizabeth Acevedo
- Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes*, edited by David Roessel and Arnold Rampersad
- Poetry Speaks Who I Am: Poems of Discovery, Inspiration, Independence, and Everything Else*, by Elise Paschen
- Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*, by Lori Marie Carlson
- Relatively Speaking: Poems about Family*, by Ralph Fletcher
- Roots and Blues: A Celebration*, by Arnold Adoff
- Side by Side: New Poems Inspired by Art from Around the World*, by Jan Greenberg
- Soda Jerk*, by Cynthia Rylant
- Somewhere Among*, by Annie Donwerth-Chikamatsu
- Song of the Water Boatman & Other Pond Poems*, by Joyce Sidman
- Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy*, by Sonya Sones
- Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems*, by Christine O'Connell George
- The Black Poets: A New Anthology Edited by Randall Dudley*
- The Playbook: 52 Rules To Aim, Shoot, and Score in This Game Called Life*, by Kwame Alexander
- This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from Around the World*, by Naomi Shihab Nye
- What the Heart Knows: Chants, Charms, and Blessings*, by Joyce Sidman
- Where I'm From*, by George Ella Lyon
- You Don't Even Know Me: Stories and Poems about Boys*, by Sharon G. Flake
- You Just Wait: A Poetry Friday Power Book*, by Sylvia Vardell and Janet Wong
- Your Own, Sylvia: A Verse Portrait of Sylvia Plath*, by Stephanie Hemphill

## Poetry Mini-Lessons

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title/Topic</b>       | <b>Finding a Purpose in Poetry (6-8 grade)</b><br>(Could be adapted for upper elementary or high school as needed)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Time Allotted</b>     | 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Materials Needed</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power point presentation or purpose statements on the board</li> <li>• Poems</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Standard</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL10: Read and comprehend poetry.</li> <li>• RL5: Analyze a poem's form and structure</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will identify the three main purposes of poetry.</li> <li>2. Students will apply these purposes to poetry that they are reading to determine what the author's purpose is.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Plan</b>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use either the board or a PPT to go over three purposes of poetry:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to create an image,</li> <li>b. to express a feeling, or</li> <li>c. to tell a story.</li> </ol> <p>(<u>Note</u>: These may not be the only purposes for poetry; however, these purposes do cover most of the poems students will encounter, so it's a good starting place to have them start analyzing poetry).</p> </li> <li>2. Read a short poem together as a class and determine its purpose from one of the three purposes that they learned.</li> <li>3. Discuss why the purpose fits using evidence from the poem.</li> <li>4. Have students work in a small group and read at least three poems that either you have selected or that they have selected and determine its purpose. If possible, each group should have different poems and they should not all have the same purpose.</li> <li>5. Have students present at least one poem to the group by reading it, stating its purpose, and giving a reason for how they know that's the purpose.</li> </ol> |



## Poetry Mini-Lessons (continued)

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title/Topic</b>       | <b>Words Matter in Poetry (6-8 grade)</b><br>(Could be adapted for upper elementary or high school as needed)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Time Allotted</b>     | 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Materials Needed</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paragraphs or short articles</li> <li>• Highlighters</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Standard</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL10: Read and comprehend poetry.</li> <li>• RL5: Analyze a poem's form and structure</li> <li>• W4: Produce clear poem with a purpose.</li> <li>• W6: Use technology to publish writing.</li> <li>• W10: Write for specific purpose and audience.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will identify words with power and interest in paragraphs.</li> <li>• Students will use the powerful words to write a purposeful poem.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Plan</b>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have students read a paragraph from literature, informational text, or even a monologue. (There are lots of readings that can work, so feel free to use something that covers a topic from science, math, social studies, or even language disciplines.).</li> <li>2. Have the students highlight the important words. Words with interest, power, or punch. They should not highlight words like the, or, if. Model how to do this for students as needed. You might want to model the whole process of building a poem from a paragraph before having them try it alone. It will depend on the class.</li> <li>3. Once students have isolated some interesting words, have them write a poem using these words.</li> <li>4. Have them find a purpose for their poem.</li> <li>5. Have them share their poem.</li> <li>6. Students can take their best poem and type it so that it can be displayed. They may want to find an image that can go with their finished product.</li> </ol> |

## Poetry Mini-Lessons (continued)

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title/Topic</b>       | <b>Writing Poetry with a Purpose (6-8<sup>th</sup> grade)</b><br>(Could be adapted for upper elementary or high school as needed)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Time Allotted</b>     | 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Materials Needed</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power point presentation or purpose statements on the board</li> <li>• Poems, paper, pens, or pencils</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Standard</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL5: Analyze a poem's form and structure</li> <li>• W4: Produce clear poem with a purpose.</li> <li>• W6: Use technology to publish writing.</li> <li>• W10: Write for specific purpose and audience.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will write a poem using one of the purpose statements.</li> <li>2. Students will publish at least one poem.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Plan</b>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Model writing a poem together as a class using a purpose statement. (I am writing a poem to create and image of _____; I am writing a poem to tell a story about _____; or I am writing a poem to express the feeling of _____.)</li> <li>2. Have students create their own purpose statement and use that to write a poem of their own. Once they have a purpose, have them brainstorm a list of powerful words that could help them realize their purpose. Here students will generate their own list of interesting words.</li> <li>3. Have them draft, revise, and publish their poem.</li> <li>4. Have them share their poem.</li> </ol> |

Poetry Mini-Lessons (continued)

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title/Topic</b>     | <b>Headline Poem Assignment 6-8 grade</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Supplies Needed</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• magazines and/or newspapers,</li> <li>• scissors,</li> <li>• glue,</li> <li>• envelope,</li> <li>• and a sheet of paper</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Assignment</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a headline poem using words you cut out from the magazines and newspapers.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Time Allotted</b>   | Students have 2 class periods to work on their poems. Students may also work outside of class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Guidelines</b>      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use at least 25 words in your poem.</li> <li>2. Use complete sentences that make sense.</li> <li>3. Use correct punctuation.</li> <li>4. Include at least three examples of alliteration in your poem.</li> <li>5. Stay with one central theme.</li> <li>6. Must be appropriate.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Helpful Hints</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Try to cut out several words that start with the same letter or sound. This will help you when you add your examples of alliteration.</li> <li>2. When you finish cutting out a word, put it in your envelope and write the word on the outside of your envelope. This will let you keep track of all the words you have.</li> <li>3. Cut out more than 25 words in case some of your words don't work in the poem.</li> <li>4. Don't paste any words to your paper until you have laid them all out and are happy with the final product.</li> <li>5. Make sure you write your name on the back of the paper.</li> </ol> |

Add Your Own Poem Here



***CAVERNS: Kentucky Middle School Poetry*, volume 1, Spring 2018. Published with support from the Kentucky Reading Association (KRA) and the Western Kentucky Reading Council of KRA. A free, full-text edition of *CAVERNS* is available from Western Kentucky University's TopSCHOLAR™: <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/caverns/> For more information, contact the editors at [kymspj@gmail.com](mailto:kymspj@gmail.com)**