



RHYME ON 2018

Loudoun County Public Library

Rhyme on Poetry Contest 2018:
Winners, Runners-Up and Honorable Mentions

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Best Love Poem

Sanguine

It is raining on the house where we used to live,
on the coppery shingles that in 2012 replaced
the original tattered green ones -- though not without
an argument, many a long, heated discussion

about that copper color. It is raining and the rain
assaults the window pains, trails in streaks
along the unwashed siding, rattles the gutters
that are jammed with years of fallen leaves,

leaves like promises and wishes we never
seemed to get around to clearing out, leaves
no longer bright green, no longer melodious
gold, nor scarlet or plum, no longer brittle from

exposure to advancing winter air. It is raining
on the empty house, and inside the rain is heard
with an echo of forgotten pasts, pattering like
innocent footsteps in a rush of childish games.

The rain is steady as the heart in sleep and still
I dare believe we'll wake to love tomorrow.

Nancy Cook

Runner Up Best Love Poem

Cherish the Times

Cherish the times
of our windswept past,
full of kids, cats,
and of course, romance.
Slobbering dogs,
indelible days,
school books and practice,
part of the haze.

Worries and laughter,
a few sleepless nights
but we kept to the road
and looked for the light.

Now is quite different
a cheery new chapter,
where tinker and toil
don't seem to matter.
The brush and the pen
have taken their place,
just happy to live
a more leisurely pace.

So lucky we are
it is a sweet life,
that only gets better
with you as my wife.

Richard C. Fink

Honorable Mention Best Love Poem

A Song of Love For My Father

My own mortality has never frightened me as much as yours
Though you are gone and I am here,
Still the fear remains

When you fell upon the frozen snow, helpless,
I tried to cover you from harm
Yet, with eagle's beak and eagle's claws,
Fiercely you protected me

The raging silence of your smile holds me safe within
Softly your quiet wraps around me,
Frees me to face all that is and all that will ever be

Though you are gone and I am here,
With eagle's beak and eagle's claws,
Gently you protect me

William Angley

Honorable Mention Best Love Poem

Lacy, White Underwear

White.

The color of love was white that summer night.
She was wearing her lacy, white underwear
and nothing else
as she danced freely around her room with the door locked
thinking about what her first time would be like
as she felt a cool, gentle breeze on her bare skin
blocking out the screaming coming from her parents' bedroom.
She was younger then; more naïve.
Pure. Magical. Clean.

Red.

The color of love turned red that fall.
The red blood that soaked her lacy, white underwear
as she lay staring out the window
feeling an intense pressure in and around her,
paralyzed, unable to make a sound or even blink,
as dead leaves swirled around like a tornado outside.
Her innocence rubbed away, raw.
Anger. Pain. Dirty.

Orange.

The color of love became orange in the winter.
Days were shorter, and nights were longer.
But the sun setting created an orange glow, that when she looked at it each night
while sitting on the roof of her house to drown out the cacophony of noises
coming from her boyfr...from her frie...from the guy's mouth from inside the house...
she felt a dull sense of hope,
that after the sun would set
it would rise again the next morning.
Fading. Soothing. Warmth.

Yellow.

The color of love became yellow in the spring.
Lying flat on her back,
sprawled out on the grass,
as she held that yellow daisy straight up to her nose, sun beating down,
grasping with her other hand onto the long blades of grass for another chance,
giving her a sense that maybe one day
she would be free
from the heartache that had become her love life.
Distant. Silent. Burning.

Green.

Her love was green as leaves began to pop out and flowers faded away.
Upside down on a hard mattress,
taking in as many puffs as she could to make everything seem all better.
Maybe all she needed was some medicine to help heal her, to make her feel again.
She needed something to bring her back from the hollowness she felt when she was with him.
Numb. Lost. Bitter.

Blue.

Her love became blue at the dance later that year.
Blue like that bruises that dressed her body from top to bottom
as she swayed back and forth in front of him
looking right into his shallow eyes to make sure not to get another one
because even though blue was her favorite color
she did not love the bruises.
Drowning. Sadness. Scared.

Purple.

Her love became purple like the amethyst in the living room in the end.
On the outside, it looked like any other rock,
one that you might not even notice because you can't tell it's any different than a rock you see
on the ground,
but on the inside of this amethyst were the most beautiful crystals she had ever seen
that could cut you deep without even trying
if handled the improper way.
and she felt like,
"This is what love must be..."
But no matter how hard she tried, she could not take her eyes off of that amethyst.
Sharp. Painful. Mystical.

Black.

Her love became black when the next summer arrived.
As she looked back on her year of love while sitting on the hot pavement with nothing but a
backpack,
not knowing where she was heading next -
she realized there was no pot of gold at the end of any rainbow,
that love was a fairytale,
and like the darkness she felt and saw in and around her,
the love she had once imagined that warm summer night,
as she danced around in her white, lacy underwear,
and nothing else...
disappeared into a dark, black hole.
Empty. Gone. Nothing.

Love was not lacy, white underwear

Emily Italiano

Best "Loudoun" Poem

A Long Time Ago in Loudoun

When I am far away I close my eyes
And Russell Baker calls me home.
Life reels in monochrome, red and brown,
Dusty roads and cornfield winds blowing

The Elders of the Blue Ridge rise,
Beautiful but burdened,
To tell their histories
Of a long time ago in Loudoun

Seven meant completion
Eastern equal
Western ideal
Our future mysterious and unbound

Kristyn Roberts Marrott

Runner Up Best "Loudoun" Poem

Beaverdam Run

These black waters do not seem to move,
except where rocks wrinkle or a leaf
goes lazing by. Ten thousand years they slid
past dandelion, aster, queen anne's lace,
but now run underneath the road, in blank
obscurity, then toward the wide Potomac.
The first pale trappers named it Beaverdam.
Who know what it was called by those before?

Whoever digs the earth with bone or steel,
for any use, degrades a holy spot.
A child's soft beast stares at the curb, thrown out
the window of a car, forever lost.
The child mourns, the day flows to conclusion,
the careless water moves its endless way,
no matter, somehow toward eventual light.

Conrad Geller

Honorable Mention Best "Loudoun" Poem

Springtime in Eastern Loudoun

On a frosty March morning,
rolling down the Waxpool blacktop
I felt the first touch of spring:
A mist of dusty red
wwirling into the pale sky,
the buzz of bulldozers and
rising from last year's woods
colossal trunks of concrete
their invisible, innumerable tendrils
long, lucent, a web circling the globe.

Here, no fields of corn and wheat
no golden apples, no peaches to reap.
To sow into sterile soil,
Bundles of wires, tangles of cables,
to send forth, not shoots nor seedlings,
but pillars and walls, and gray, ugly roofs.

Here, no robins visit and nestle aloft,
no cardinals perch amid green boughs.
the swarms, a cataract of bits and bytes
of sizes, mega and giga and tera,
The churr, a high-pitched medley of machines,
of grinding and sawing and scraping.

Sprouting in every fallow field
colonies of windows and walls,
the budding buildings and condominiums, spreading
across the shrinking spaces into
super-sized homes of the bourgeois who are
- of this we have no doubt -
the only, the final inheritors, sovereign
over every last tract of land.

Inside these great domestic vaults,
a profusion of golden goodies.
Outside, tiny rectangles of green,
mono-toned, mono-colored, trimmed just so,
the fiefdoms of fescue and bluegrass where
any and all transgressions get Roundup fast.

Here I am, in Eastern Loudoun,
the battlefield
of Civilization's March where,
with its tools and weapons, the armies
pave, dig, dredge, level hills and scour farms,
and fell every last resistance of those old-timers,
those tall, strapping, patient trees.

Later that day, in Ashburn Farms,
I step out into the green,
battle-ready, I hold steady
my trusted weapon of assault,
this screaming weed-whacker:
ready for action, ready to kill,
ready to destroy all that's foreign
to my genteel spring.

Then, surprise! soft, soundless descends the spirit,
of perfidy, of surreptitious treason,
of a higher fidelity, perhaps,
to the gods of this season.

I drop the noisy fieldpiece:
the sudden silence
into my heart a prayer brings
for the cheerful dandelion,
for the miracle of eternal Springs.

Sonik Malik

Honorable Mention Best “Loudoun” Poem

Loudoun

A porous bubble blown into the shape of a home
By fate, in between her inscrutable cackles,
Enveloping the fortunate or not; each a gnome,
Hers—bound to a luscious lawn as if by shackles—
Behind affixed smiles dying for their grass to grow;
Vying for that coveted, comforting shade of green
As though for life, when in fact it’s merely a show
That loses all appeal as soon as it goes unseen.
But should one look in the gutters or a pile of trash,
The products unwanted, imperfect, and broken
Glimmer with a forgotten beauty sacrificed for ash
And perfection, that term undefined yet so often spoken.
Poverty, ignorance, and vice live on the same unfinished street
As wealth, wisdom, and virtue in Loudoun, where all contrasts meet.

Amr Mekki

Funniest Poem

Undead sonnet 130

With apologies to literature teachers everywhere.

My mummy's eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is smoother than her bony brow;
If snow be white, who cares: her breasts are gone;
If hairs be wires, then she is wireless now.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses graced her burial shroud;
And in most perfumes is there more delight
Than in her reeking, sulfurous, noxious cloud.
I love her guttural screech, yet well I know
'Tis like the scrape of silverware 'gainst teeth;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress plods and trails dust underneath.
 And yet, our love is as alive to me
 As was my love in 2,000 B.C.

William Shakespeare

Tara Campbell

Runner Up Funniest Poem

To My Dentist

How joyful did I feel when in that chair
I lay my head, my mouth pried open wide,
benumbed and prepped for your assessing stare,
assistant's hookah gurgling at my side
to suction off saliva lest I drown
ere last old tooth to youth has been restored
like deposed monarch fitted with a crown
that, uninsured, takes all I can afford.
Lo, all these many years I've paid the cost
when X-rays showed the shadows of decay.
Despite the fact I've always brushed and flossed
Each checkup meant a check was on its way.
Now each tooth's a pearl without a filling.
I'm so done with drilling, billing. Thrilling!

END

Nancy Brewka-Clark

Honorable Mention Funniest Poem

The Cockroach: A Sonnet

I cringe before a few of nature's pests;
The cockroach makes my courage disappear.
He looks most fearsome in his coat and vests,
But hairy legs are what I really fear.

I dread the morbid clicking of his wings,
Though guessing his intentions are meant well.
It's just that I abhor all crawly things!
And worst of all, they wish with me to dwell!

It's quite unnerving when you wake at night
To see two beady eyes atop your chest.
You jump and scream with horror and with fright,
And then discover he's brought all the rest.

So if eternity for me is hell,
I'm sure it's with the cockroach citadel.

Katy Huth Jones

Honorable Mention Funniest Poem

Cats' Eyebrows

Cats' brows stick out and that, alas, is
why they cannot wear sunglasses.
Brows can grow on certain mammals,
not on dogs, yes on camels.

Bushy, arched, pointed, wrinkled,
long or short, knitted, crinkled,
brows have hairs that grow obliquely.
Some folks have to pluck them weekly.

But, despite how hard they wish,
there are no brows on birds or fish.

Laura J. Bobrow

Best Free Verse Poem

Clunis Prefers Australorps

Clunis's favorite hen is blue-black,
ringed and flaming in the right light
like some feathered aurora borealis,
fierce emerald glittering to purple,
bursting across the expanse of those wings.

She is proud in the breast and greedy,
lays golden eggs
which he enjoys every morning
and hoards from Agatha, his wife,
who tastes no difference in the color of a yolk.

She sits on his lap when he naps in the hammock,
(the chicken, not the wife)
to watch the leaves tussle above,
and nibble crumbs from his jacket.

He'll do it, of course, when the time comes,
but will take no pleasure in shaving
that small avian soul off the face of the world,
won't savor Agatha's stew,
won't feel the same when he lays his head
on that feather pillow
to crave a dreamless, guiltless sleep.

Jenna Pashley Smith

Runner Up Best Free Verse

Bronzes

The room resonated with history -
clanging hammers,
sweating brows,
the heat of molten ore,
the cool of a frescoed garden.

We stood as supplicants before them.
They reflected the capriciousness of life
in our thoughtful gazes.

The detail of a sandal,
the ringlet of hair,
the furrowed concentration of the athlete,
the smooth contour approximating flesh.

Only a few retained their eyes.
One, missing a leg that had been cast separately,
For others, only their heads remained -
bodies lost to the ages.

They were far from home, these bronzes,
survivors of time, shipwrecks, wars -
conquerors of Vesuvius' ancient wrath,
the farmer's plow, the plunderer's greed.

In restless slumbers
they lay beside Poseidon's hall
until redeemed from muddy earth
they awaken.

Ashen blankets
wrestled aside
they rise
greeted by a new era.

Sing your songs, oh bronzes
of ancient ages.
The songs we sing
are the same.

Brenda Hicks

Honorable Mentions Best Free Verse

After the Bonfire

The revelry is gone.
The heat has faded, and the celebration
has lumbered, heavy-stepped, off to bed.
The sun settles under heavy covers
made from green hills and mountain tops
and the moon keeps watch
with its drowsy eye. Time stops.

Only the fire still glows,
dancing the last song of the night.
You're the last to leave,
with no more will than to watch the flames.
Drained, you admit the bitter truth:
My parents are going separate ways.

Brown turns to black
and black to white.
Curling flakes scatter
in the wind, scales of the dragon
that breathed them to life.

Tonight is miles away from daytime,
why waste breath being brave?
So I make you coffee
and we huddle beneath a blanket
for closeness more than warmth.

Tomorrow you'll watch your world
drive off in separate moving trucks.
But for now, the flames keep away the dark,
until the dark again becomes day.
The alive feeling dead,
the dead growing ever more alive.

Taylor Thackaberry

Honorable Mentions Best Free Verse

When Your Niece Attends a Jewish Day School

When your niece attends a Jewish day school,
you're grateful for the security guards who man the lobby desk
and the metal detector installed beside them,
and you obediently fish out your "Relative" ID card
as you enter the building.

When your niece attends a Jewish day school,
you silently bless the nearby precinct headquarters
and actively thank the uniformed officers who stand at the school's front door
as you arrive for the latest musical,
which, this year, is *Fiddler on the Roof*.

When your niece attends a Jewish day school
and stars as Tevye in that famous play,
you imagine again how much it would have meant
to your refugee grandparents, for whom she is named,
to have met her.

and as the costumed children chant the words to "Anatefka"
you sit, spellbound,
thinking of all the other families assembled with yours
in that first-floor auditorium,
the bonds that connect you,
the ancestral spirits mingling above.

Erika Dreifus