



# RHYME ON 2020

Poetry Writing Contest

Loudoun County Public Library



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## Free Verse

Winner: Kathrine Gotthardt "Discussion Topic"

Runner-up: Sidney Wollmuth "We Run"

Honorable Mention: Charles Maranto "The Month of May"

Honorable Mention: Kurrinn Abrams "Can You Feel That?"

## Discussion Topic

You told me, once,  
maybe two decades ago,  
in this same space by the window,  
coffee in hand, face mocking serious,  
“True love endures beyond the grave.”  
Except now, I am old enough to ask,  
sincerely – what if there is no grave?

Don't look at me funny.  
What if there's only  
the immortality of now,  
striking a pose  
like some bathing suit model,  
gesturing to you, hips forward,  
like you're still young,  
and I'm still the jealous type,  
and we've yet to have our children?  
And so I tell you,

no, I'm not sure  
about forever love, my dear,  
not sure about it at all.  
I'm not sure  
the waves would want to bear ours,  
nor am I sure  
sand would care to cradle it any longer.

Tell me, when was it we last  
walked the shoreline,  
scrunching our toes around  
smooth rock and memory?  
Held hands and watched the sun rise –  
or set – it doesn't matter which?  
Too long, and even then,  
that sip you just took  
took longer, compared  
to our years together.  
Is that what you wanted  
to carry into infinity?

Look a little closer.  
See how time holds its breath,  
daring that same death to take it?  
It knows more than it tells,  
having seen the tides change,  
having asked from whence the water comes,  
having witnessed season beget season,  
night beget day, and yet still,  
the mad drive to create something to outlast itself,  
when really, there was never a need.

Afterlife was always here.

We were always here.

Now, don't we feel silly?

Katherine Gotthardt

## We Run

we pull sports bras  
over our heads,  
the purple kind  
laced with filling, shaped  
to camouflage  
the pointy, the sloped  
so no man  
can point  
to our chests  
and use smoke signals  
as an excuse

we promise our mothers  
we won't venture  
the off beaten  
the murky  
the rooted/shaded/shortcutted  
and though our calves  
are built like weapons,  
we bunch kitty-kat  
knives in our fists, swing  
plastic hammers by our sides  
unhinge the plugs from our ears  
at the first rustle  
bustle



even if it turns out  
just to be a squirrel

we yearn for our high school  
years, those running girl gangs  
who shouted ROOT in the  
woods  
and clasped our knuckles  
when the biker moved  
too  
slow  
we did not need  
mesh against  
our stomachs  
to feel safe  
we used to push  
our thighs  
until we sobbed,  
never worrying  
about who  
would find  
us  
panting  
on the sidewalk

Sidney Wollmuth

## The Month of May

Was a windy day in the month of May,  
when Waldo Lafackle made his way,  
slipping, slopping, never stopping,  
to catch a glimpse of the imperial realm,  
laced in gold, ceilings bold, all tied to cockle shells.  
Can you play that old guitar, time in tune with  
the banjo man - Ainsley Forthright, corn mash sipper,  
banjo picker, man amongst the mountain tops.

Can you play that old guitar, can you dance the sounds enhanced,  
whirling, swirling, life unfurling, waltz across the universe,  
sing among the stars, moonbeams on silver screens,  
an idea's illumination, a sparkle in the eyes.  
Lafackle and his raucous cackle, unto the soul of one,  
had ventured out to seek life's flairs,  
life's cares and dares, all engines burning.

But on the road where shadows fall,  
where breath is low, and pilgrims hollow,  
Lafackle walked onto a dark plateau, mopped with muck,  
striped with slush, steeped in mire, crossed with sludge.

How can the gallant fall so far, betrayed by life,  
by man and methods, friends and strangers, lingering dangers.  
Beauty shares the Earth with war, and birth and death are never far,  
a dark parade behind each door, waiting in time,  
in eternal hours that grind through today and tomorrow.

Was a dark day in the month of May,  
when Waldo Lafackle made his way,  
but call him peculiar, call him odd, he took upon the downside,  
he stepped right up, he stepped right over, and thus spake he:

"I shan't accept the dark colossus,  
twas always about the cerebral process.  
This old guitar that I do have, will shine upon the day.  
These feet will dance the psychedelic trance to walk the snares away."

Was a peaceful day in the month of May,  
when Waldo Lafackle made his way.

Charles Maranto

Can you feel that?

Can you feel that?

Fluttering wings against my will

Heart that was hurt, love cannot fill

And yet,

here you are.

Can you feel that?

Anxiety seeping through the cracks

Jump forward, but take two steps back.

And yet,

here you are.

Can you feel that?

Falling into familiar ways

Stop pushing against the same old grain

And yet,

here you are.

Can you feel that?

Tripping down the rabbit hole

Going against the you I know,

And yet,

here you are.

Can you feel that?

Building deep inside my soul

Paralyzed by fear, and still I fold

And yet,

here you are.

Kurrinn Abrams

## Funniest Poems

Winner: Amy E. Wilson "Ode to the Mobile Lounge"

Runner-up: Janice H. Walker "Good Walk Spoiled"

Honorable Mention: Joan Kennedy "Grendel and Beowulf"

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Ode to the Mobile Lounge, Page 1

Ode to the Mobile Lounge

Like mighty beasts of yore  
Across the blacktop plain  
Migrating door to door  
Depart, arrive, again

What is this strange domain?  
Not van, not bus, not train  
Once many, it is true  
The numbers grew and grew

They roamed like caribou  
Across the tarmac wide  
A dream from sixty two  
With seats and carpet hide

Oh mobile lounge, our pride  
The future's airport ride

Amy E. Wilson

## A Good Walk Spoiled\*

(\**Golf is a good walk spoiled.*" ~ Mark Twain)

When I was a young, inexperienced bride,  
My husband made a purchase that filled him with pride.  
He showed me a satchel with weird-looking sticks,  
And said they could do all manner of tricks.  
He pulled out one stick; it was metal and shiny,  
Got in a stance and then stuck out his heinie.  
He called it a "wood"; it was certainly not.  
Then took what he called his first "practice shot."  
There wasn't a target, don't know what he shot,  
But he did his best, so I smiled a lot.

Next day we got up; it was just after dawn.  
He was very excited; I stifled a yawn.  
We went to a park that was landscaped and green,  
As pretty a picture as you've ever seen.  
It had beautiful trees; it had wide open spaces,  
With flower beds planted in all kinds of places.  
It had lovely ponds with small graceful bridges  
And flocks of geese and ducks and pigeons.

The shoes he put on had soles with tacks.  
Then he slung his satchel over his back.  
We walked up to a mound he called a "tee,"  
And he whacked a ball far as we could see.

Then he picked up his bag and stormed off the mound  
And searched for a ball that would never be found.

Then he placed a new ball on the soft fairway grass,  
And with all of his might, he swung hard and fast.  
Up flew the ball with a great chunk of earth.  
I don't know which went farther—the ball or the dirt.  
He stormed after the ball, so angry . . . and . . .  
Then he found it where you play in the sand.

Well, he swung several times, finally digging a hole  
You would think had been dug by a crazed, hungry mole.  
At last the rogue ball wound up near a flag.  
When he struck it again, it zigged and it zagged,  
And it rolled and it rolled down the slippery slope, and . . .  
When it rolled to a stop, it was back in the sand.

As the sun rose high in the bright summer sky,  
I sighed to myself and wondered "Why?"  
But then his next shot went right into a hole.  
Though the ball looked lost, he lifted the pole  
And waved the flag as proud as could be  
For his dazzling hole #1 victory.

And as summertime seemed to turn slowly to fall,  
He hit and we chased that tiny white ball.  
Ne'er did he tire, ne'er did he droop  
As we waded through forests and fields of goose poop.



Stumbling through sand and wading through water  
He treated that ball to abuse and to slaughter.  
When at last we arrived at the end of the course,  
I thought he'd be filled with regret and remorse.  
Alas, to my surprise and to my sorrow,  
He beamed and said, "Let's come back tomorrow!"

Janice Walker

## Grendel and Beowulf

There was a groundhog; let's call him Grendel  
Beneath a shed in Lovettsville, Grendel's lair was laid  
He could've stayed there, out of sight and mind  
But Grendel had a new world to invade

There was a farmer; let's call him Beowulf  
Beowulf had a tender heart for critters great and small  
Then Beowulf noticed a fresh-dug tunnel  
And Beowulf gave his cabin porch a new rat wall

It soon came clear that the beast had tunneled  
Straight into the cellar of Beowulf's cabin home  
Not only that but he'd reached the ductwork  
Which sort of gave him access to every single room

One day when Beowulf was watching baseball on TV  
He heard an unfamiliar sound chattering and weird  
And there stood Grendel; the two locked eyeballs  
Then Grendel skittered up the stairs and disappeared

And in the office off the main cabin room  
Someone or something had laid savage waste  
Papers scattered on the floor, a pile of unfamiliar turds  
And the casement window crank had snapped off at the base

Grendel ran outside and that's where Beowulf laid a trap  
Baited with an apple wedge for catching beasts alive  
It trapped a squirrel and then it trapped a skunk  
But the demon it was laid for was nowhere in sight

One day Beowulf saw the trap had been emptied of its bait  
Something had evaded the spring that snaps it closed  
Then Beowulf saw the apple wedge had been carried up the steps  
And laid right at the doorstep to Beowulf's cabin home

So here's to Grendel, and here's to Beowulf  
To them I raise my flagon full of mead  
Here's to the country, here's to the quiet, rustic life  
And here's to the rug where Grendel peed

Joan Kennedy

## Cheep Lodging

There's a transient dwelling near our back door  
    With whose tenants we share quite a rapport.  
We call it "The Condo", it's demeanor quite frugal---  
    No plumbing, no heat, no cable, no Google.

Overcrowding exists, if truth be known,  
    Occupants exceed norms for that neighborhood zone.  
But there is one feature that makes all worthwhile---  
    Room Service daily, outdoor dining in style.

By now you've detected this verse is a spoof---  
    A substandard lodging, no basement, no roof,  
No doors for entry or windows for light?  
    What housing authority would permit such a site?

"The Condo" in question houses residents galore,  
    "Inter-nest Tweeters" in and out by the score.  
It's a sanctuary formed from a stately thick shrub  
    Which, come late Fall, becomes an active "grub hub."

Dawn brings clamor, an ornithological din.  
    Chatter from black birds---"let the banquet begin!"  
Chickadees, sparrows, goldfinches, "Papa Card"  
    Fill five feeding stations across the back yard.

As watchful observers who prepare the buffet,  
    We await the collage, woodpecker, bluejay.  
And less frequent guests who just happen along---  
    Word travels fast when food's had for a song.

And taking note too of this fluttery scene,  
    Saint Francis of Assisi, overseer of cuisine.  
Renowned patron saint of our feathery friends  
    Who oft perch his pate ere the full serving ends.

As spring approaches, warming weather, soft showers,  
    A management decision to focus on flowers.  
Store thistle, the suet, all leftover seed---  
    Shut down the take out, resume natural feed.

Noel J. Doyle

## Poems of Loudoun

Winner: John Rowley "Me and Her Majesty Up On the Ridge"

Runner-up: Margaret Peppiatt "The Veins of Loudoun"

Honorable Mention: Adrienne Elko "Loudoun Defined"

Honorable Mention: Eva Weitzel "Loudoun County, Virginia (2020)"

## Me And Her Majesty Up On The Ridge

I knew it was there  
Our time standing still  
Me and her majesty in *purcellville*  
Those songs in the air  
That spirit to fill  
Me and her majesty out towards *round hill*

I eased off the speed  
Like never before  
Me and her majesty by *sleeter's* shore  
We only had needs  
There was nothing more  
Me and her majesty at *hill high's* door

I wrote it all down  
To hold it all in  
Me and her majesty into *bear's den*  
She hid every sound  
We risked it again  
Me and her majesty where *loudoun* ends

I know she just lied  
Though loving I did  
Me and her majesty cross *no man's bridge*  
I put it aside  
For we were just kids  
Me and her majesty up on *the ridge*

John Rowley

## The Veins of Loudoun

In the shadow of Washington, D.C.

Lies a land flowing with wealth and history

Sustained by roads that on a map stand out like veins

Pumping a constant current of the blood that gives life to this county

People drive on winding roads against the backdrop of the blue ridge

Passing neat rows of grapevines on gentle slopes

Wineries neighbored by lush fields and horses with glossy coats

Scattered streams and stone walls built long ago

Old roads run parallel to pedestrians treading the sidewalks of old towns

Main streets lined with large display windows of stores

Churches and post offices nestled next to colonial-era homes

Lampposts hung with wreaths for Christmas and flags for the Fourth

People drive on busy roads past clusters of current construction

New houses and data centers growing like crops in the fertile soil

Near commuters navigating clots of cars on weekdays

Mingling always with trucks and common yellow buses

The web that weaves together the past and the ever-changing present

The movement of people through old and new

As they flow through veins in this breathing body

To the rhythm of the heartbeat of Loudoun County

Margaret Peppiatt



## Loudoun: Defined

Majestic mountain ranges rise and fall like a picket fence in the distance

Tucked snugly like a patchwork quilt near the Shenandoah Valley

As the mighty Potomac courses by in swirls and rapids

Sprinkled with farms robust with rye, hops, horses and grapes

Ruby red cardinals perch on snowy white dogwood branches, creating a striking contrast

Hawks float up above, making lazy figure eights through cotton candy clouds

Bike, Hike, LoCo Ale trails with companion dog tails

Cozy villages with classic cobblestone streets, country fairs, shoppes and pubs

Innovative technology against the backdrop of a Metropolitan lifestyle

Rich and abundant with Diversity

History

Industry

Legacy

Scenery

THIS is Loudoun.

Adrienne Elko

## **Love Poems**

Winner: Kimberly Ray "In My Pocket"

Runner-up: Martin P. Bromser-Kloeden "Love for a Novel Spring"

Honorable Mention: Francoise Nelles "The Generous Tide"

Honorable Mention: Toby K. Davis "Awakening"

## In My Pocket

I fixed upon you out of the lot  
pushed you deep into my pocket  
so deep  
but you crept out at the seams  
with memories of  
bursting sunlight beams  
that couldn't be shadowed  
by my dark rinse jeans

Your heartbeat was tapping  
I answered with a rapping  
but now it's time to rest  
this love of ours was never meant to be addressed

A thumping heart in my chest  
could not be oppressed  
my truth I did profess  
my mind became obsessed  
my body undressed  
your silences were enough to protest  
that you were simply not impressed  
my navigation was due northwest  
sheepishly I regressed  
laid myself down with a soft headrest  
and let this love fall into a deep rest

Now to be stowed away  
deep into my pocket  
I will pull you out again  
when I need your radiant ways  
to pull me out of the darkest of day

Kimberly Ray

## LOVE FOR A NOVEL SPRING

Locked in at home and all alone  
The threat had clearly grown  
For the world had changed in just one night  
And all at once what was is out of sight

But the birds still sing and precious bees buzz  
As all around me a sweet spring sprung  
For the flowers, squirrels, sun and sky outdoes  
What a microscopic menace had wrung

And from my window I can see  
That though right now I can't be free  
Life goes on for you and me  
Wherever hope and love will be

Martin P. Bromser-Kloeden

## The Generous Tide

In a burst of new love, my heart overflows  
The ocean inside meets the ocean outside

I fly through the world on light feet  
then slow as I approach the house that holds my love  
I cling to the moment, hold back, savor anticipation

But no force can stay the tide of love  
that pushes me towards that house  
that catapults me into his arms

I stand in front of him. He stands in front of me.  
We are both shy, waiting, needing the moment's perfection  
So I talk  
I compose tales too complex even for me to comprehend,  
tales that move too fast for one caught in a riptide  
of emotion and desire.

Is the flood pushing us towards solid ground?  
Is the flood pushing us out to sea?  
I don't care.  
I abandon myself to the swells,  
enter the waiting arms,  
merge with generous giggles.

Later I am beached, bereft, disconnected  
though I know staying in the water, I would surely drown.  
We are not fish.

It is good, also, to dance on the sand  
and gaze at the beauty of light on the water.

The tide always returns.

Francoise Nelles

## Awakening

Love feels me.

His moon dipped fingers

Spread brandy blushes

to cheeks,

Slide along necks

inner curve to

untanned, unknowns. . .

Pillowing his touch.

He pauses to kiss

the skipping beats.

Splintering icicle hung shadows,

Crusting crater edged pools. . .

Never to be frozen again.

He paints yesterdays

with his tears,

Gentling lips, lashing

corners of eyes. . .

Causing softness to

brush all I see.

This touch,

your touch. . .

A realness to awakening,  
An awareness of no end.

Toby K. Davis



