

LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Poetry Contest



Poetry Contest *Teens*

2026 Anthology



LOUDOUN COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Thank you to our guest judge and speaker:

Leonor Alvim Brazão

International poet/artist

Thank you to our generous sponsor:

Loudoun Library Foundation

Table of Contents

Free Verse Category:

High School

Winner: Nandana Renjish, “The Shore of Shifting Tides”	Page 6
Runner-up: Minhaj Ashrati, “Locked”	Page 8
Honorable Mention: Ife Frierson, “That Day, That May”	Page 9
Honorable Mention: Dane Adams, “Some Verses in the Woods”	Page 15
Honorable Mention: Oliver O’Rourke, “Smile”	Page 17
Honorable Mention: Sidh Jaddu, “Fitz Roy”	Page 21
Honorable Mention: Isabelle Dino, “The Medicine Cabinet”	Page 24

Middle School

Winner: Hidote Zulla, “Melting Step by Step”	Page 26
Runner-up: Siri Gudi, “Jealous”	Page 31
Honorable Mention: Seetha Cheruvu, “Winter Falls”	Page 33
Honorable Mention: Alaina Beach, “The Death of Paris, Prince of Troy”	Page 35
Honorable Mention: Phobe Chau, “Perfect”	Page 40
Honorable Mention: Emma King, “Morning”	Page 42

Poems That Rhyme:

High School

Winner: Samara Masson, “Ode to my Mom”	Page 44
Runner-up: Christopher Markis, “Childhood”	Page 48
Honorable Mention: Arjin Nawaz, “Priceless Love”	Page 49
Honorable Mention: Juliet Blake, “Sacred Pines”	Page 52
Honorable Mention: Maka Devaiah, “Waking Into a Dream”	Page 53
Honorable Mention: Linden Rosati, “Ballad of the S.S. Daisy”	Page 55

Middle School

Winner: Maria Chicas, “Expectations”	Page 59
Runner-up: Everly Dean, “Winter Tree”	Page 61
Honorable Mention: Isabella Majeed, “Fleeting Things”	Page 62
Honorable Mention: Sia Patel, “28 Scoops”	Page 63
Honorable Mention: Lily Larkin, “Do Season Ever End?”	Page 65

Performance Poetry:

High School

Winner: Mia DuValeus , “You Were With Me”	Page 67
Runner-up: Lauren Kim, “Chameleon”	Page 67

Free Verse: High School

Winner: Nandana Renjish, “The Shore of Shifting Tides”

Runner-up: Minhaj Ashrati, “Locked”

Honorable Mention: Ife Frierson, “That Day, That May”

Honorable Mention: Dane Adams, “Some Verses in the Woods”

Honorable Mention: Oliver O’Rourke, “Smile”

Honorable Mention: Sidh Jaddu, “Fitz Roy”

Honorable Mention: Isabelle Dino, “The Medicine Cabinet”

The Shore of Shifting Tides

Nandana Renjish

I trace the coastline on a glowing screen,
Drowning in the songs and cinema's light.
I wear the silk, the gold, the forest green,
And claim a home that's ghosting out of sight.
I watch the games
I watch the movies' glow
I learn the lyrics, try to play the part
I harvest every bit of "us" I know,
And plant it deep within a lonely heart.

Yet when I land, I'm still a foreign face,
A guest who speaks the tongue with borrowed breath.
I squint at signs I cannot read or trace,
And watch the script drive past me into death.
The letters blur, a wall I cannot climb,
I have the sounds, but lack the hand to write.

I seek a home, but only find a space
Where every move I make is out of place.
But at my grandmother's feet, the air turns cold,

As she carves the world in shapes of "must" and "shame."

I watch my parents shed the grace they hold,

And trade their modern hearts for an older name.

They match the village pulse, the backward stare,

Becoming judges of the lives they left behind.

A sudden weight of rules hangs in the air,

As empathy is clouded by a different mind.

The cousins whisper when I walk the hall,

I'm far too loud, or standing far too tall,

Forgetting how to hide the "here" within.

I see the progress stopped at every street,

The way they look at girls who want to lead.

Where modern dreams and iron borders meet,

And "tradition" is the only word they heed.

I'm caught between the old world and the new,

Underneath these heavy, crowded skies.

I am a daughter of the monsoon rain,

Whose understanding is never quite complete.

They live the struggle; I watch the shore,

Always wanting home, then wanting more.

Locked

Minhaj Ashrati

The ridge of the Hindu Kush is a jagged spine,
Cutting the sky into "ours" and "mine."
I spent eleven years in that thin, silver air,
Watching my sisters hide books under prayer.
They walked quietly, heads down in the hall,
While rules we didn't choose built up a wall.
Now I'm five years deep in a Virginia spring,
Where a yellow school bus is a normal thing.
Kids laugh out loud, they answer, they speak.
Not afraid of being called wrong or weak.
But I still think about how it used to be
When girls had to hide and read quietly
Learning shouldn't depend on where you're born,
Or if you're a girl who's told to conform.
I've seen what happens when voices are made small.
I've seen the difference when they're not heard at all.
So, open the doors. Don't keep them closed.
Let girls sit down where knowledge grows.

That Day, That May

Ife Frierson

It's funny how the world
gives you no sign
of tragedy
no sudden rain like in a movie.

The world just keeps spinning
round and round
waiting for you to find out.

That morning, in fifth grade
the sun rays made the dust dance in the light
as I lay in bed
not knowing.

But how could I?
How could I have known?

My eyes fluttered open as I rose
half awake, from my bed
and walked over

to my mother's office.

"Good morning!"

I said, full of innocent cheer

like always

Not knowing today

wasn't

always.

"Good morning,"

Said my mom

voice breaking

eyes watery

The words

"What happened?"

had barely left my lips

Before she hugged me

and cried

on my shoulder

She gently released me with a watery smile,
tears never spilling.

I slowly moved towards the door
shellshocked
shoulder damp

Unease and fear
crashing over me,
goosebumps forming on
my skin

Because

What horrible thing
could have happened
to make
my mother
cry?

Admittedly, I don't remember much about that day.

This account is a blur, memories and feelings strung together
forming a mess of words

But one thing is certain;

I will always see that image
of my mother crying on my shoulder
clear as day.

I found out in the car, on my way to school.
My dad drove me, quiet, pensive.
He chose his words delicately
like his words could cause me to crumble away

“Yesterday, teachers and kids... died.”

“You could hear about it at school.”

Kids.

Not much younger than me.

Teachers.

Brave souls who protected them with their life.

Time seemed to stop.

Tragedy happened

without warning

without reason

without a way to rewind.

It burst my
bubble of ignorance.

At school, the mood was a mix
of clashing emotions,
hidden grief and unknowing smiles
I wondered,

How could the innocence of this morning
feel a lifetime
away?

The next morning,
A police car appeared
outside my school.

A stoic sentinel.
A fresh scar.
A glaring warning.

The next day, I checked the news.
Every single day.
Each morning.

Waiting for a warning.

It took too long to realise
that ignorance
was a sin
I could no longer bear to indulge in.

I could wait
for a sign
no
more.

Because that May, the world gave no warnings.
It just kept spinning.
It just kept witnessing.

Like always.
Like forever.

Some Verses in the Woods

Dane Adams

Tell me, you great vines that weave through heaven's vault,

Of ancient Holocenic days and untold forest lives.

Leaf through your thousand rings—

What stories will you choose

Of ten hundred years lived beneath the open sky?

What birds, what timid squirrels have lodged

Beneath your emerald arches?

What love songs has the wind from your branches swept away?

What children have you born, in countries far and near;

What loved ones have you lost and with life endowed again?

Tell me of the tears that you would shed if you had eyes

When each year the flowers wither in your hair

And winter gales ravish your yet drooping leaves;

When hollow Sleep descends with numbing frost upon the woods

And all history seems to cease;

And tell me too of Spring, and the transports of rebirth,

What it means to live a life a year,

A thousand years to live,
And every one a page that wraps back round upon itself
Every day a word in the ringèd book of Life.

What choirs, great Cathedrals,
Have you fostered in the heights?
What bards have hymned 'neath your tinted shade?
What foolish frays of men have you glimpsed on hills below—
Or have you feared their matricidal blade?

But enough—I ask in vain.
Your ring-tales locked remain;
Each page faces only in.
Such things perforce must not be known
By fiends such as I.

Smile

Oliver O'Rourke

Smile

Smile

Smile

How does one do that?

How is it natural?

How do I prove I'm human?

Quiet breathing

Soft eyes

Turned lips

Gentle

Peaceful

Pleasant

Quiet breathing

You will look like a fairy

Float like an angel

Keep your wings tucked deep in your spine

If you lift your chin

It can look effortless to be calm

Soft eyes

Not as rounded as pity

Not as sharp as joy

Like a hopeful child

Looking up at the sky

The first time you see every single star

And you are reminded that the world is beautiful

Turned lips

Don't show your teeth

Not so high that your cheeks move

Just a subtle lift at the ends

The face girls made in old paintings

You are made of oil and pigment

Flattened and perfected

Gentle

Peaceful

Pleasant

No presence at all

Don't take up any space

Speak when you are spoken to

You are made of marble

Or maybe

Glass

Look at me

I'm smiling

I'm being good

Am I a person yet?

Am I enough?

Do you love me now?

I can starve until the hunger

Seeps into my bones

I can be graceful

I promise

Don't look at the blood under my fingernails

That splintering horror I'm sure stains my face

Don't look at that

Look at my hair

Look at how the gold catches the light

My eyes are not hollow

They are not wild and terrified and burning

Please

My eyes are soft

Look at my face

Look at my smile

I'm doing it

I'm smiling

Smile

Smile

Smile

Fitz Roy

Sidh Jaddu

Tires hum down Ruta 40,
the plains stretching out like a slow, deep breath.
On the horizon, Fitz Roy stands sharp against the sky,
a distant peak you chased across the land.

Lago Viedma shimmers, fed by ancient glaciers,
the wind sweeping across its deep, cold water.
Wild guanacos pause in tall, golden grass,
curious and calm.
Some journeys cannot be rushed.

El Chaltén is a simple outpost,
a few streets at the base of the mountains.
A small café offers coffee in old mugs,
and a single gas station marks the edge of the wild.

The hike begins where the town ends.
A clear lake mirrors the sky.
The forest whispers with the tapping of woodpeckers,
and every step forward feels like turning a new page.

The climb builds, steady and certain,
until the final stretch:
a staircase of stones
that asks you to let go.
Your breath gets short, your muscles burn,
but something bigger than your body
pushes you upward.

And then you see it: Laguna de los Tres.
A silent, turquoise lake,
held in the arms of the mountain's granite peaks,
the wind a whisper one moment,
a powerful roar the next.

The hardest climbs break you open—
not to defeat you,
but to reveal your resolve.

On the way down,
knees aching, but your heart full,
you carry Fitz Roy on your shoulders.
The image doesn't vanish—
it travels with you,

a reminder that peaks aren't meant to be conquered,
they're meant to be experienced.

And in the quiet return to town,
as stars appear in the dark sky,
you know the mountain has given you
not a destination,
but a mirror.

The Medicine Cabinet

Isabelle Dino

Open the mirror,
Find all of your insecurities,
Stuffed in with those
Q-tips and bandages.

Open the mirror,
See all of your worries,
In the form of pills,
Locked up but never gone.

Open the mirror,
Hear all of your fears,
Echo against the walls
Of those stocked shelves.

Open the mirror,
Or close the mirror.
It really doesn't matter.
Your mind's still inside.

Free Verse: Middle School

Winner: Hidote Zulla, “Melting Step by Step”

Runner-up: Siri Gudi, “Jealous”

Honorable Mention: Seetha Cheruvu, “Winter Falls”

Honorable Mention: Alaina Beach, “The Death of Paris, Prince of Troy”

Honorable Mention: Phobe Chau, “Perfect”

Honorable Mention: Emma King, “Morning”

Melting Step by Step

Hidote Zulla

The ice is cracking again,
and the cub slips as his mother pulls him up,
and she looks around like the world is falling apart.

The factories run because someone wants more,
because energy is cheap,
because profit matters more than snow,
because the machines never sleep.

The smoke rises because we burn,
because we drive,
because we build,
because we ignore the weight of heat.

The oceans warm because the ice melts,
because the sun is stronger,
because the clouds are heavy,
because the world doesn't stop.

The bears swim farther because the ice thins,

because the seals are harder to catch,
because hunger doesn't wait,
because their world doesn't pause.

The cub shivers because the water is cold,
because his mother moves on anyway,
because survival doesn't wait for comfort,

Every step the mother takes is careful, deliberate, measured,
because falling means death,
because drifting to far means the cub might not make it,
because the ice cannot promise safety,
because the sun is relentless and the water is cold.

The forests shrink because we chop,
because we burn,
because we pave,
because we fail to recall that life lives there.

The rivers warm because we spill,
because we waste,
because we take too much,
because we think someone else will fix it.

The ice cracks, the cub slips,
The mother roars,
and still she moves forward.
Step by step, breath by breath.

Because the cub depends on her,
because there is no other way,
because the world doesn't wait.

But there is a spark in all of this,
A thing that still matters,
we notice,
we can act,
we can slow factories,
we can choose energy that doesn't burn the sky,
We can stop pretending the world is endless.

There can be solutions,
tiny at first,
like planting trees,
like fixing machines to waste less,
like cutting back on heat that climbs north,
like giving ice a chance to stay solid,

like giving polar bears a world they can trust.

The mother bear keeps walking,
the cub follows
the ice waits for no one,
the water doesn't pause.

But we can move too,
step by step,
choice by choice,
because we are the reason it melts,
and we can be the reason it survives.

It is not too late,
not if we see the cracks,
not if we choose to act,
not if we let the polar bears live in ice that holds,
not if we let the world breathe again.

Step carefully.

Move forward.

Notice.

Act.

Because the ice can stay,
and the cubs can swim less far,
and the whole world can still be held in the hands of those willing to care.

Jealous

Siri Gudi

“I’m jealous. Okay?”

I just wanted you to notice me,
but everyone wants what they can’t have.
So I’m jealous of the stars,
that get to shine into your dark, deep, brown eyes.
I’m jealous of the moon
that illuminates your dreams.
I’m jealous of the wind,
being able to echo in your ear.
I’m jealous of the water,
that gets to reflect the light of your face.

And I think I’m starting to get jealous
that the world has you.

But I can't.

because even if you knew
that I rose the sun for you,

you would draw the curtains.

Winter Falls

Seetha Cheruvu

The chill returns,
A clockwork ghost.
I watch the years blur,
While I remain rooted and static.
Bare-branched shiver,
Stripped with their greenery.
This frost does more than sting,
It claims the marrow.
The ache of being alone,
Deepens its grip on Earth.
I am dreaming of a life
We once shared together,
Drifting through the hush,
Until the stillness speaks.
Light fails earlier now.
The sky holds its shadows longer.
And the ice,
A white heave sheet,
Suffocates the grass.
Since the gales began their howls,

Remorse has quieted the fire in my chest.
I am powerless to change the past,
The memory returns to haunt the room,
Stumbling over the ghost of who you were.
Winter descends once again,
The drifts falling more pristine
Than a flowing mountain stream,
Covering everything in a lie of purity.
I'll strive to clear the wreckage.
The jagged edges of us lingering
Right around the corner of my mind.
I cherished you as you did me.
Now the frozen dust drops again,
And as it settles, we dissolve.

The Death of Paris, Prince of Troy

Alaina Beach

Philoctetes

Dodging

Left to right, in the thick of the battle.

Suddenly, I see him.

Paris, shooting arrows from behind the safety of his own wall.

Coward.

Now's the time,

I draw my arrow,

Dripping with the serpent's poison.

I shoot.

Paris

Dodging

Left to right,

arrows flying by.

Is that Philoctetes, I thought they left him behind.

Greeks!

Calling on a deserted comrade in their final hour.

Ah!

Oh.

Only skimmed by his arrow.
That shall soon me amended.
I stand, aiming for his heart,
Then blackness wraps around me.

Oenone

Dodging
Left to right, wherever he cannot catch my eye.
Paris, I can't help but see him there,
Lying poisoned, only I to help him.
Ha!
Why does Helen not help him now?
Gift of the goddess,
Paris's only love.
Go then, seek her help!
Fool, am I not a nymph of healing?
But I shall not help him.
He has left me twice now,
Always for Helen.
Oh!
What have I done?
Helen can not help him!
I have left him to die.

Philoctetes

Dodging

Left to right, the image always follows.

Paris, drawing his arrow

His eyes rolling back.

Then falling back into Death's waiting blanket.

Will not the poison cause him more pain than it did me?

Writhing

Desserted

One island

One me

Dragon's poison

In him,

In his family.

One arrow,

The dragon's curse spreads from him to his loved one's hearts.

And now mine is stained black.

Paris

Dodging

Left to right, trying to escape Death's shawl.

But here I lie upon it,

Though now it is pulled from my breast for a moment.

A moment of pain.

Sharp

Thumping

Wrapping

Piercing

Stinging

Oenone looking away.

My love!

Why did I leave you?

How can I tell you

Tell you

You

I

L..lo-

Oenone

Dodging,

Left to right, the pain.

Pairs, I can no longer tell him-

Gone

GONE

DEAD

FOREVER

PARIS!

My love, oh I love you!

Come back!

Come back!

Ahh!

Love!

Paris!

My..

MY..

In the flames I hold you.

Consume me flames,

as I hold my love.

Paris.

In me,

Around me,

Burning.

Hold me,

Paris.

Perfect

Phobe Chau

No, no, no

I didn't do it

I'm sorry

"Sorry can't fix everything"

But I hope it can

I think it can

Late, late, late

"Why didn't you ask for help?"

I was afraid you would get mad

"That's no excuse"

A, B, C, D, F

"How could you let it get this bad?"

I'm sorry

"You should be sorry for yourself"

I'm not...

"You did really good"

But it's due by tonight

"It's okay"

It's okay now

I'm so behind

“No you’re not?”

I think I am

Behind, behind, behind

I’m not...

“Why aren’t you like them?”

“Why are you learning so slow?”

“You should have understood this”

“This is easy”

I’m not...

I can’t get an F

No D, no C, no B

I’m not...

“Why are you like this?”

Let, me, Finish

“...Fine...”

...Perfect

“What ‘perfect’?”

...I’m not perfect, enough

Morning

Emma King

Golden sunlight

pours

through the window,

thick like honey.

Warm and glowing,

it drips

and fades

into shadow.

Poems That Rhyme: High School

Winner: Samara Masson, "Ode to my Mom"

Runner-up: Christopher Markis, "Childhood"

Honorable Mention: Arjin Nawaz, "Priceless Love"

Honorable Mention: Juliet Blake, "Sacred Pines"

Honorable Mention: Maka Devaiah, "Waking into a Dream"

Honorable Mention: Linden Rosati, "Ballad of the S.S. Daisy"

Ode to My Mom

Samara Masson

You see a version of me
I have not learned
to believe.

A light
I try to dim,
but you refuse to leave.

You call me out
so clearly,
that I'm negative
and I doubt.

But you point
to something shining
within me,
that I'm still
trying to find out.

You push me

toward the edges
that I would never
choose alone.

Tell me
to put myself out there,
be who I am
out like I am at home.

Because you stand
behind me,
because you say I can,

because you see a
finish
before I start
a plan.

And when I talk
in circles,
the same thoughts
on repeat,
you listen

like it matters,
wait until every word I say
is complete.

Six hundred times
I've said it,
six hundred times
you stay,

answering
every worry
like it's the first time
I've ever said.

You never
make it smaller,
you never
brush it past,

to me it seems
real heavy
even when
it probably won't last.

You are
the sunlight
that breaks through
all my doubt,

showing me
the brightness
I keep trying to put out.

And maybe
one day
I'll see it,
the way
you always do.

But until then,
I'll borrow
my belief in me
from you.

Childhood

Christopher Markis

Those distant days of whimsy past.
The ones we wished would ever last.
The days of laughter, youth and joy,
Lost beneath the world's employ.

Days go by, and times, they change.
And looking back, it seems so strange.
We played, we joked, we spent our days
As all the while time slipped away.

We never knew how soon they'd go,
Nor how quickly time would flow.
But though we've grown
And though we've aged,
As we turn over our next page,

That child still inside us lives,
And another chance it gives,
To bring back joy that boredom took,
If you know just where to look.

Priceless Love

Ajrin Nawaz

Before I learned the world was cold,
Before I feared growing old,
There was a woman, soft yet strong,
Who held my hand my whole life long.

Before my first steps touched the floor,
She loved me deeply long before.
Nine months she carried sleepless nights,
Through heavy pain and dim porch lights.

And when I cried at 2 A.M.,
The dark did not discourage them,
Those tired eyes still stayed awake,
For every fever, cough, and ache.

She tied my shoes.
She checked my grades.
She sat through long and endless waits.
Outside rehearsals, games, and meets,
She waited parked on empty streets.

Sometimes her voice would rise too high,
And younger me would ask her why.
I thought she worried way too much,
Not knowing love can look like such.

But growing older made me see
Her fear was love protecting me.
The anger never really stayed,
It hid inside the prayers she prayed.

She hid her worries every day,
And kept her heavier fears away.
While I got angry over small things,
She carried burdens life still brings.

And somehow still, she always knew
The words to say when life fell through.
When confidence and hope broke,
Healing arrived each time she spoke.

No medal hangs around her name.
No crowds appear to praise her fame.
The world may never understand

The strength inside a mother's hands.

Because a mother's love stays true,
Through every phase you struggle through.
Through every door slammed out of pain,
She still stands by you just the same.

And now I'm older, near grown tall,
I finally understand it all.
The strength I thought I found alone
Was built by hands that raised my own.

In every dream I pursue,
Her sacrifice still carries through.
And all I am, and hope to be,
Began with her believing me.

Because through every rise and fall,
She stood beside me through it all.
And nothing in this world above,
Can match a mother's priceless love.

Sacred Pines

Juliet Blake

The pastor warned about homes built on sand
While we sat, rapt, beneath the Sacred Pines
The girls across from us were joining hands
But it felt different when you reached for mine

A spark lit when our fingers intertwined
And it blazed through the night, like August heat
But never burned, like some God given sign
Who were they to say you were wrong for me?

You know how much I hate to walk away
To leave the almost-truths and campfire songs
But God is everywhere, not just this place
I don't have to stay where I don't belong

We built a home on strong foundation here
But I can't come back to Camp Revenir

Waking Into a Dream

Maka Devaiah

Dreams are just worlds in the Realm of Asleep,
Where consciousness swirls in oblivion deep,
Where nightmares unfurl and shoot me with fear...
When my eyes close, my sight is most clear.
Everyone tells me, "Dreams can come true!"
But what if they were, and nobody knew?
Who gets to say what is real and what's not?
Who says reality can't be a thought?
Call me insane; my mindset won't change.
"Insane" is just code for "a skeptic who's strange."
Hear my hypothesis, now hear me say:
"There's a reason we sleep at the end of the day..."
Eyelids grow heavy, mind starts to blur,
I fell asleep when? I can't be quite sure.
Muscles relax, thoughts wander far,
Sweet dreams or nightmares, they'll be what they are.
Sing me to sleep so I smile while I slumber,
Or I could count sheep and lose track of the number.
I don't want to cry myself into the night,
Or I might awaken before the dawn light.

Crazy things happen inside of my soul,
When sanity stops to relinquish control,
Logic clocks out, let the next shift begin!
Logic steps out...subconscious steps in.
Venomous stingrays, kayak just sank,
Falling into an aquarium tank,
Facing down crocodiles, trekking through bogs,
Trying to run from one million dogs.
These movies are new, each one never seen,
My mind the projector, my eyelids the screen.
But what if that's wrong, and we've made a mistake...
And dreams are just worlds in the Realm of Awake?

Ballad of the S.S. Daisy

Linden Rosati

Beneath the waves where silence lies,

A battered hull now softly dies.

The S.S. Daisy, strong and true,

A coastal ghost in shades of blue.

From Aberdeen her journey sprung,

A sturdy ship, her story sung.

Built for war, a navy's aid,

In icy seas and battle's shade.

She swept the mines, surveyed the tide,

Through wartime storms she did abide.

Then sold to guard the shores anew,

Against the smugglers' shadowed crew.

But fate had more for Daisy's name,

A wave of wrath, a tidal flame.

The 29th of November's wrath,

Burin's town swept from its path.

The mighty wave tore through the land,

Yet Daisy stayed, a steadfast hand.
She towed the boats back to the shore,
Saved lives and hope when all was poor.

Though wireless sat unused, unknown,
The crew's brave hearts made hardship shown.
Two hundred miles she steamed to tell,
Of ruin where her loved ones dwell.

For years she served a faithful guide,
Through coastal towns on ocean's tide.
Until her time was finally done,
Her race with time and earth begun.

Encased in wood, a cage of time,
The pilings hold her silent rhyme.
A fortress forged from earth and tide,
Where metal bones and memories hide.

The scrapyard grew, the years wore thin,
The wharf, the camp, a story dim.
Her decks once filled with life and crew,
Now steel and rust, and thickets grew.

Yet slowly, surely, time reveals
The ghostly shape her frame conceals.
Deckhouse walls and engine's crown,
Beneath the dirt and water down.

The tiller still points toward the sea,
Where once she sailed, bold and free.
A silent sentinel of days gone past,
The S.S. Daisy, memory vast.

Though she now sleeps 'neath tide and stone,
Her tale lives on, a whispered tone.
Of battles, storms, and courage bright,
A hero lost, yet still in sight.

Poems That Rhyme: Middle School

Winner: Maria Chicas, "Expectations"

Runner-up: Everly Dean, "Winter Tree"

Honorable Mention: Isabella Majeed, "Fleeting Things"

Honorable Mention: Sia Patel, "28 Scoops"

Honorable Mention: Lily Larkin, "Do Seasons Ever End?"

Expectations

Maria Chicas

Careful where you step, my dear.
One missed step, that's all they hear.
No one focuses on the good,
And in every way we should,
Love our faults and hold them near.

A secret held like a cracked, cold stone,
Praying that only to us they're known,
Guarded with all our might,
Pretending to be ever so light,
And all because we're glass and chrome,
Then not only to us will they be shown.

Trapped, suffocating, beneath those dreams,
Torn, ripped at our seams,
We are not what they want us to be,
Perfect, spotless, clean and free.
We are less than society deems.

In the dark we know so well,

Trapped inside the neverending spell,
All our work will be undone,
For our heroes remain yet unsung.

Winter Tree

Everly Dean

In a quiet clearing stood a small young tree,
Shorter than the tall old pines nearby.

The river moved beside him slowly,
And the gray rocks watched the empty sky.

Then the winter wind came rushing through,
Shouting loudly across the hill.

It pulled at branches, hard and cold,
Trying to bend the tree by will.

The snow fell down and covered the ground
Soft but deep around his feet.

The river whispered “Just stay strong”
While the night grew dark and bittersweet.

All winter long the wind kept pushing,
Certain the little tree would fall
But when the sun came back to warm the earth,
The small tree stood through it all.

Fleeting Things

Isabella Majeed

Life is full of fleeting things,
Whether big or small,
And I think the hard thing is
That sometimes you give them your all.
Sometimes you find a fleeting thing,
And throw it right in your life.
You make space for it, make room for it,
Just for all that not to suffice.
Because fleeting things,
No matter what they are,
Are still fleeting things
That are from afar.
Because the door for them is always ajar,
It creaks and it bends much too far.
And eventually that door must shut,
Just when you give fleeting things too much.
Because fleeting things,
Whether big or small,
Will not leave
Until given your all.

28 Scoops

Sia Patel

When you go to the ice cream store,

You mustn't ever wait.

For the best flavor in the store,

Is all 28!

When you go to the counter,

Ask the worker for 28 scoops

And as you walk away with your treat,

You'll- oop's!

Sometimes you end up in a heap,

With your ice cream all around you.

And your 20 dollars melts away,

Turning into sticky, sweet goo.

But never fear,

I have a plan!

Just use a plain old cup

Put the ice cream inside,

And drink it right up!

Mm...

A little gritty, there's definitely gravel in here

But who knew how delicious ice cream could be,

When all of the flavors adhere?
Lavender honey and strawberry
Raisin and cookies and cream
Peanut butter and... is that garlic??
I guess everything is not as it seems
Your tastebuds will go on a journey
Your mouth will fizz and pop
When you're done, you'll want to say
I hope this never stops!
But all good things must come to an end
And likewise, this milkshake supreme
But don't forget how this started
With 28 scoops of ice cream.

Do Seasons Ever End

Lily Larkin

As Spring flowers begin to bloom
Their scents weave together like yarn on a loom.
Our dear Mother Nature has now awoken,
And words of spring she now has spoken.
Hold these magic moments close to you,
Forgetting them simply will not do.

As the Summer sun blazes on the land,
Rain is of very high demand.
Spring babies, now grown tall,
Stock up on food, preparing for fall.
Hold these magic moments close to you,
Forgetting them simply will not do.

As Autumn leaves begin to fall,
It's the prettiest rainstorm of all.
The critters and creatures will crawl into their lairs,
Hiding away from all the wintry scares.
Hold these magic moments close to you,
Forgetting them simply will not do.

As Winter snow covers the Earth,
A sharp, bitter wind starts to take birth.
A cardinal perches in a nearby tree,
Singing its song of the brave and the free.
Hold these magic moments close to you,
Forgetting them simply will not do.

Now all the wintry white will go,
With flowers and grass in place of the snow.
As Spring's heat begins to mend,
I wonder, do seasons ever end?

Performance Poetry

Winner: Mia DuValeus, "[You Were With Me](#)"

Runner-up: Lauren Kim, "[Chameleon](#)"

*Thank you to
everyone who
participated in
our competition
this year.*



LOUDOUN COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY