

Poetry Posts!

Pairs student and adult poems with questions
to ask the poem-partners

An anthology designed to stir up original writing from the reader

Edited and with an introduction by
Louisa Lindsay-Sprouse
Director of Young Writers Association

Young Writers Association

... stirring up literary play in youth and community

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Community Opportunities

- Mixed Voices: writers on the radio, KLCC
- Creative Writing Contests: YWA's fall and winter challenge
- Glitterary Word Festival: Mixed age celebration of the writing art
- Writing Groups: creative writing after school with local authors
- Stories From Here: interviewing and creative writing across generations
- Poetry Posts: broadsides of student poetry
- Ask the Poem: interviewing poems
- Imaginative Writing: Author visits, Writing Labs and Writers In Lane County Schools
- UpStarts: publication of Lane County young people, k-12

Interdisciplinary Programs

- Literature Camps: active summer day camps based on great books
- Teen Outdoor Creative Writing Camp
- Young Escapades in the Arts, YEA!: a storyteller inspires a day in writing and the arts
- Young Escapades in Science, YES!: integrates science, creative writing, art
- ArtsParties: playing with a story and its theme, families write, interact, and eat
- Eat Your Words: relax into literacy! Inspired by a read aloud, write, cook & eat
- Folk tales to Your Tales: write, illustrate, act, imagine
- Let your words out! Shape creative writing into performance material
- PlayUp the Arts: active teacher workshops engage in literacy through the arts
- Words Plus: the interplay of creative writing with another discipline--fun and standards-based

Enriching Experiences with YWA

YWA provides opportunities to inspire young developing writers through community connections. It also offers programs to stimulate the joys of reading and writing with an interdisciplinary approach to literacy, building excitement around literature and creative writing in classrooms, camps and intergenerational settings.

YWA ... stirring up literary play between youth and community

s t o r i e s p o e m s m o v e m e n t a r t
YWA FOR KIDS AND TEENS
a c t c r e a t e i n v e s t i g a t e i m a g i n e

Post Office Box 51538 : Eugene, Oregon 97405
541-485-2259 : www.ywalane.org

Introduction

Young Writers Association is an educational nonprofit, stirring up lively literary arts explorations for youth in Lane County, Oregon. After school writing groups, in-school residencies, community events, contests and summer camps bring working writers and youth together to engage in the art of writing and the excitement of good books. YWA publishes student work in journals, posters, and through its radio program.

YWA Poetry Post Anthology captures a project done in cooperation with our county school district. After creating posters of poems written by youth, YWA posted them in all Lane County schools three times a year. Schools not only prominently displayed the Poetry Posts, but also had staff read the poems during announcements over the intercom.

The anthology also captures a resource YWA developed over time for its teachers of creative writing. We paired each selected student poem with one by an established writer, pairings that in some way resonated with each other through some similar concern, emotion, or question. We then added interview questions for the partnered poems, as if each were a living entity, eager to talk back from within the world of the poem.

Whatever our age and whichever age we live in, we share some of the same questions, wonderments and repulsions and we use the power of words to explore our inner and outer worlds. I hope these clusters of poems and questions reveal lines of thought to open up possibility, to surprise you, dear reader and invite you to play with words and share your word-explorations with others.

Louisa Lindsay-Sprouse, editor

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High School Poetry

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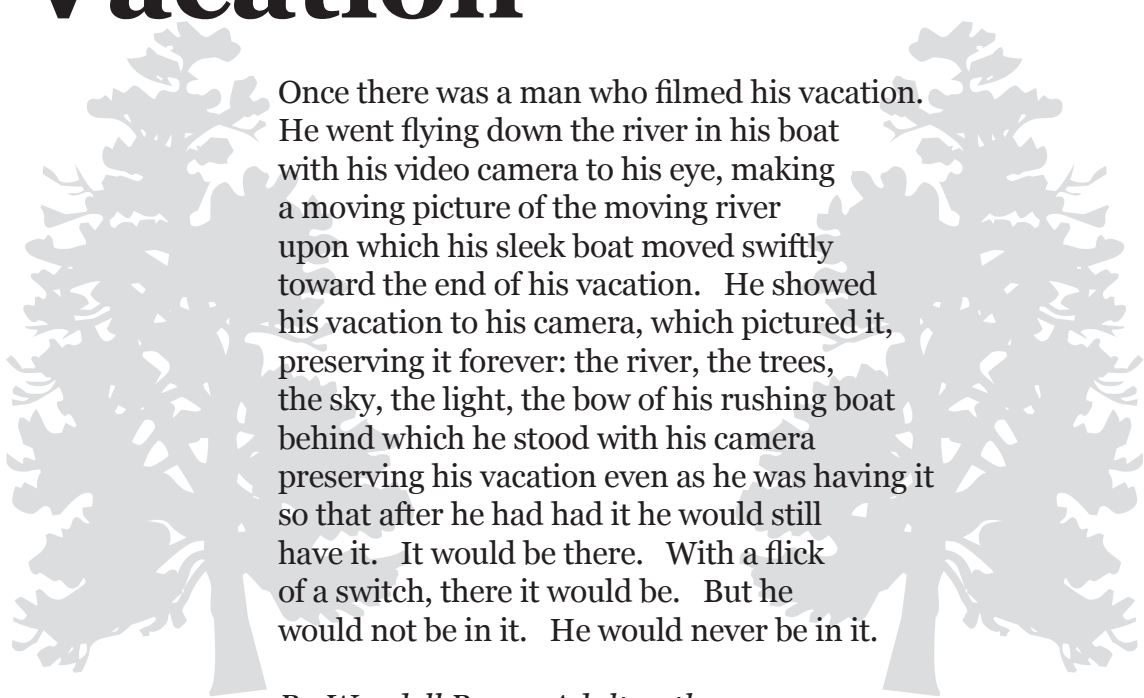


At Fifty Miles an Hour

The twinkling of the city goes by
At fifty miles an hour
Ribbons of red and yellow light
Flash across your glasses
Like the twisting tails of Chinese dragons
In a dusty obsidian sky
The rattling noise of the warm night
Rushes through your open window
And crackles in the car
Like sparks of noise
Filling our ears and ruffling your hair
The sprawling streets of concrete go by
At fifty miles an hour
People live out their lives in the city
But from the freeway
They are nothing more than a blur
In the tangle of laundromats and restaurants
That fade into each other
And we do not see them
At fifty miles an hour
The eyes behind your glasses sway
To gaze upon the city
Then flicker back
To the rushing lines
Painted on the slowly crumbling concrete
The night and the road and the city
Take little notice of us,
At fifty miles an hour

By Katherine Westermann, Age 17

The Vacation



Once there was a man who filmed his vacation. He went flying down the river in his boat with his video camera to his eye, making a moving picture of the moving river upon which his sleek boat moved swiftly toward the end of his vacation. He showed his vacation to his camera, which pictured it, preserving it forever: the river, the trees, the sky, the light, the bow of his rushing boat behind which he stood with his camera preserving his vacation even as he was having it so that after he had had it he would still have it. It would be there. With a flick of a switch, there it would be. But he would not be in it. He would never be in it.

By Wendell Berry, Adult author

Ask
the
Poems

- Who is on this journey?
- What do they connect with?
- What do they not see?
- Who sees them?
- What is their destination?

Eurydice and Orpheus

Don't turn
The stone walls are weeping and the flowers I wore have all wilted
Look ahead and the world grows light
Do not turn
Were I not formless, I would reach out to touch your singing mouth
Please trust, do not turn
I am with you, love, though now I'm hidden and dark
Don't turn, only sing
My dancing will be in the shadows and my footsteps the soft, blue
echoes of your own
Sing, do not turn
And we'll meet in the honey-warm world of light once more

By Phoebe Sheldon Young, 11th Grade

Leave-taking

I do not know where either of us can turn
Just at first, waking from the sleep of each other.
I do not know how we can bear
The river struck by the gold plummet of the moon,
Or many trees shaken together in the darkness.
We shall wish not to be alone
And that love were not dispersed and set free—
Though you defeat me,
And I be heavy upon you.

But like earth heaped over the heart
Is love grown perfect.
Like a shell over the beat of life
Is love perfect to the last.
So let it be the same
Whether we turn to the dark or to the kiss of another;
Let us know this for leavetaking,
That I may not be heavy upon you,
That you may blind me no more.

By Louise Bogan, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Must every turn be tragic?
- Where is it safe to be together?
- What other gifts can you give each other?
- Who keeps the memories?
- Where will you go next?

Ocean Sestina

The crusty crab
gathers threads of mist
grains of gold and amber sand
to weave a blanket
so Grandfather Time
can sleep.

The ocean never sleeps
and the tireless crab
has no concept of time
running out, fleeting as mist
like a thin blanket
of sand

through an hourglass. Sand
is more precious than sleep
an offering for the blanket
of waves, all the humble crab
can give. One moment in time.

By Jemila Spain, Age 15

Peace

Peace flows into me
As the tide to the pool by the shore;
It is mine forevermore,
It will not ebb like the sea.

I am the pool of blue
That worships the vivid sky;
My hopes were heaven-high,
They are all fulfilled in you.

I am the pool of gold
When sunset burns and dies—
You are my deepening skies;
Give me your stars to hold.

By Sara Teasdale, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- How can time be still when it is running out?
- What does the sea change?
- What rides on the skin that separates sea from sky?
- How can you rest when the waves go in and out, and the tide goes in and out?
- How long is a moment?

M e m o r i e s of a **Rainy Day**

The gentle rhythm of rain strums our paneled roof
as I help my mother in the bright kitchen
kneel on a cushioned chair
in front of silver bowls
scattering sugar like a fine white snow
over ridges and canyons of moist flour.
I mold the scene with a fat wooden spoon
mapping the geography of my world
like when I burrow in my parents' huge bed
tunnel under layered sheets and flannel comforter
imitating the mole rats I saw once at the zoo
pink and wrinkled, burrowing into the warm darkness
of the familiar.
I emerge, poke my head into fresh light
bundle of blankets and laughter.
In the evening, when the last traces of cookie
have been scrubbed from my teeth
I sit folded in the scent of my mother's lavender soap
And crisp pages
studying the soft pastel drawings and blocky letters
I am just beginning to understand
until my eyes slip closed and I drift
lulled by words and the quiet breath of rain.

By Jemila Spain, Age 15

The Game

Outside my window an English spring was summoning home its birds and a week-long fog was tattering into wisps and rags and at last I could see the railings when I looked out.

I was a child in a north-facing bedroom in a strange country. I lay awake listening to quarreling and taffeta creaking and the clattering of queens and aces on the inlaid card table.

I played a game: I hid my face in the pillow and put my arms around it until they thickened. Then I was following the thaw northward and the air was blond with frost and sunshine and below me

was only water and the shadow of flight in it and the shape of wings under it, and in the hours before morning I would be drawn down and drawn down and there would be no ground under me

and no safe landing in the dawn breaking on a room with sharp corners and surfaces on which the red-jacketed and cruel-eyed fractions of chance lay scattered where the players had abandoned them.

Later on I would get up and go to school in the scalded light which fog leaves behind it; and pray for the King in chapel and feel dumbly for the archangels trapped in their granite hosannas.

By Eavan Boland, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What does the weather's music say to the person you are now?
- What other dreams found homes under the covers?
- How often does the house turn transparent and let the weather in?
- What happens during the pieces of day you have left out?
- Can you speak the languages of sounds other than language?

Identity

What would you do?
If I told you who I was?
If I told you my secret identity?
Would you run?
I have to keep it a secret.
Because I don't want anyone to
know who I truly am.
Why can't I be the real me?
Hiding under a thousand masks,
What else would you ask?
If you knew who I am
You would have already run.
Under all the pressure,
To be so perfect.
At least it's a nice gesture.
If I took off the masks
There would only be a hundred more.
So don't try to open that door.
Will you say you love me?
If I were to show you what I am? Will you believe me?
If I were to tell you who I am?

By Ashlie Ortiz

We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

By Paul Laurence Dunbar, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Where are the people who don't wear masks?
- How old were you when you first put the mask on?
- Does your inner self wear a mask to speak with you?
- What if there is no real face underneath?
- Can masks keep you warm and safe?

After Harvest

The farmer rocked in his chair
his eyelids drifting down
He barely saw through the lenses of
his glasses now
As he grew ever more weary
the intricate rope of stars
blurred into a milky river of dreams
and hopes and wishes
The blanket of darkness did not
suffocate him
The air swarmed with secrecy and possibilities
His breath formed in translucent white blossoms
Rain started to sprinkle out of the sky
salting the earth -- the rich aesthetic feast
of the heavens above
He dropped the hammer on the porch ground below and
let his fingers subconsciously brush the grain of the chair
as the darkness of sleep clouded his sight

By Jocelyn Wensel

Stripped

you're beginning to float free
up through the smoke of brushfires
and incinerators
the unleaved branches won't hold you
nor the radar aerials

You're what the autumn knew would happen
after the last collapse
of primary color
once the last absolutes were torn to pieces
you could begin
How you broke open, what sheathed you
until this moment
I know nothing about it
my ignorance of you amazes me
now that I watch you
starting to give yourself away
to the wind

By Adrienne Rich, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What will the spring bring you?
- How do you bring the sky inside of you, and what do you do with it?
- How are your lives interlaced with trees?
- What do you grasp when you let go of what you have or are?
- What do you breathe in?

The Letter

“Père Noël”

Garnishes the single page
Caught in the small sleeping fist

Cradled in a hammock
Of tinsel ribbon bauble brightness
The dozing child
Smells reindeer breath

Just hours before
Impish Claus had paused over the letter
Ink still wet
And considered this young personage
Who
On the shores of another land
Was dutifully eating green beans

Prompted by a reindeer grumble
Père Noël had tucked the note
Into the fleece pocket
Under the shine of his belt
And ambled past
The polished painted palace warmth
Of his workshop
Into the deep Finnish winter

He roosted on a clutch of gifts
As he sailed the skies
Swooping down chimneys
Then lingering at a hearthside
To nestle the letter among the fragrant needles
Of an evergreen

It was there the child had found it
And tipped the words
From page to mouth
Where they floated
Into the child's stomach
More satisfying than milk and cookies
To feed the child's dreams

By Zoë Livelybrooks, Age 17

The Secret

Two girls discover
the secret of life
in a sudden line of
poetry.

I who don't know the
secret wrote
the line. They
told me

(through a third person)
they had found it
but not what it was
not even

what line it was. No doubt
by now, more than a week
later, they have forgotten
the secret,

the line, the name of
the poem. I love them
for finding what
I can't find,

and for loving me
for the line I wrote,
and for forgetting it
so that

a thousand times, till death
finds them, they may
discover it again, in other
lines

in other
happenings. And for
wanting to know it,
for

assuming there is
such a secret, yes,
for that
most of all.

By Denise Levertov, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What other paths can words travel us into?
- What does poetry taste like?
- Where can we keep secrets so we don't lose them again?
- How do we send secret gifts to others?

Untitled

I am from fir trees and waterfalls,
weekend hikes and road trips.
I am from biscuits and gravy, bonfires and
“Come get your red hots!”
I am homemade fries and chocolate sauce, too.
I am from hard work, and dedication,
Laughing fits with my sister and
“I can draw a dog face on the computer”
I can count to 100 the fast way.
I am from sing songs and Chinese cuts.
I am from green, green lawns and macaroni.
I am a tetherball swinging in circles on the playground.
I am horse falls and lemonade stands.
I am from being driven to school each day.
I am from “no dresses” and “no jeans.”
I am from running through the sprinkler, picking bouquets and
babysitting the neighbor kids.
I am lost and
many doors are open.

By Ana Barnes, Age 18

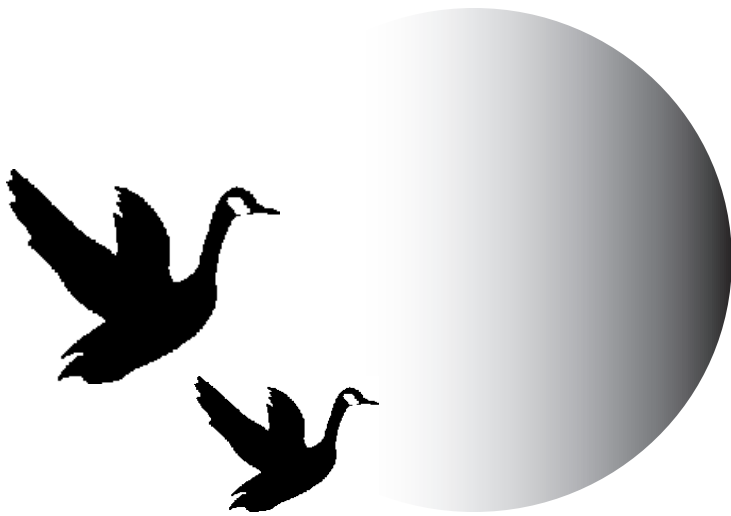
You Reading This, Be Ready

Starting here, what do you want to remember?
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?
What scent of old wood hovers, what softened
sound from outside fills the air?
Will you ever bring a better gift for the world
than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?
When you turn around, starting here, lift this
new glimpse that you found; carry into evening
all that you want from this day. This interval you spent
reading or hearing this, keep it for life —
What can anyone give you greater than now,
starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?

By William Stafford, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- When you turn around, what is the new thing you see?
- What is the taste in your mouth right now?
- When the future reaches for you, will you take its hand?
- Where will your foot fall next?
- What do you see with your eyes shut?



Opals and Sage

Deep in the red-lit canyon
 Pillowed clouds and rough, grey grass
 Arms wide, a bird's easy dance
 Wind and the open window
 The gardener is growing opals and a basket full of sage
 Dusty red rock, apples and sage
 Brown owl lifts above the sandy canyon
 A knotted old oak, growing opals
 Silk sky and singing grass
 Piano laughter, lifting out the window
 Afternoon flight, wildflower's dance

By Phoebe Sheldon Young, Age 15

The Wild Geese

Horseback on Sunday morning,
 harvest over, we taste persimmon
 and wild grape, sharp sweet
 of summer's end. In time's maze
 over the fall fields, we name names
 that went west from here, names
 that rest on graves. We open
 a persimmon seed to find the tree
 that stands in promise,
 pale, in the seed's marrow.
 Geese appear high over us,
 pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
 as in love or sleep, holds
 them to their way, clear,
 in the ancient faith: what we need
 is here. And we pray, not
 for new earth or heaven, but to be
 quiet in heart, and in eye
 clear. What we need is here.



By Wendell Berry, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Who else will fly?
- What will you harvest when the sun goes south for winter?
- What goes on under the surface of the earth that such things grow there?
- What hides in the marrow of opal seeds?
- Where else will windows and skies open to?



Planting Memories

I don't remember, but I do.
How can one truth not be true?
Apparently, my memories have lied.
Apparently, the silence keeps me dry.
So I recount what I keep—
Every new memory before I sleep.
I work to fill an undone book.
So tomorrow I can see what I undertook.
And every morning I reread
Each little planted seed.

By Jana Barnes, Age 18

These are the Days when Birds Come Back

These are the days when Birds come back—
A very few—a Bird or two—
To take a backward look.
These are the days when skies resume
The old—old sophistries of June—
A blue and gold mistake.
Oh fraud that cannot cheat the Bee—
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief.
Till ranks of seeds their witness bear—
And softly thro' the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf.
Oh Sacrament of summer days,
Oh Last Communion in the Haze—
Permit a child to join.
Thy sacred emblems to partake—
Thy consecrated bread to take
And thine immortal wine!

By Emily Dickinson, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Why do you remember?
- What would you write about forgetting?
- What can be renewed from a season that has passed?
- What will you use from a treasured memory to start something new?

Goodbye

Goodbye bare feet, I cannot live shoeless anymore
Goodbye cold water, I cannot stand to swim in March anymore
Goodbye cut off jeans, I don't grow taller anymore
Goodbye times tables and timed tests; you do not scare me anymore
Goodbye tops of trees, I am too heavy to climb that high anymore
Goodbye black cat, you are long gone and you will not scratch me anymore
Goodbye redheaded little friend, you have grown up and do not want to tag along
anymore
Goodbye lunchroom drama, I am far away in the library so you do not come find me
anymore
Goodbye burned fingers; I have learned my lesson and will not touch hot elements
anymore
Goodbye secret valentines, slipped into lockers when no one is looking, I don't need to
hide anymore
Goodbye to writing locked away secret poems, I am not afraid to read them anymore

By Katherine Westermann, Age 17

On the Road

By the toe of my boot,
a pebble of quartz,
one drop of the earth's milk,
dirty and cold.
I held it to the light
and could almost see through it
into the grand explanation.
Put it back, something told me,
put it back and keep walking.

By Ted Kooser, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Why do you leave?
- What do you take with you?
- What are you afraid to let go of?
- How do you welcome me?
- How do you protect yourself?

“Your laughter and your bones that quake”

Your laughter and your bones that quake,
Rustle in the leaves.
Grow, ungrow, dissolve and wake,
Whisper what you please.
You will be old and young again,
This circular world forever turns.
Ride with the rhythm, butterfly child.
Eternal, you cling to the earth.

By Phoebe Sheldon Young, Age 15

Morning Poem

Every morning
the world
is created.
Under the orange

sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again

and fasten themselves to the high branches—
and the ponds appear
like black cloth

on which are painted islands

of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft trails

for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit
carries within it

the thorn
that is heavier than lead—
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging—

there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what it wanted—

each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning,

whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray.

By Mary Oliver, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What is the nature of beginnings?
- What do you want me to know about the art of seeing change?
- In your story, what does the earth want to be?
- How are the butterfly and the beast alike?

Inside

What goes on inside
Paragraphs is impossible
Rivers twist and turn
And I sit and write
To put pen to paper
And make something
Worthwhile
When nothing comes
Except random bits
And pieces
From something
You've heard before
But can't remember.

By Lizzi Wolfram, Age 15

The Poem I Just Wrote

The poem I just wrote is not real.
And neither is the black horse
who is grazing on my belly.
And neither are the ghosts
of old lovers who smile at me
from the jukebox.

By Joy Harjo, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- If you looked in a mirror, what would you see?
- If you added other phantoms, which ones would you choose?
- If you had a soundtrack, what would be playing?
- Who are you talking to?
- What would you be like if the impossible and the unreal were taken away?

Me, the Disease

I am bruised knees
Waving at tie-dyed children through school windows
Falling out of trees of apples
I am red with confused fingers
 I seem to be looking for a megaphone
I am dead dragonflies
 I seem to be a train
I am wet footprints down the dock
I am catching the next wave out of here
 It seems I am not the only one
I am fossilized peanut butter in a rented kitchen
I am making air graffiti where everyone can hear me
 With my tongue
All-nighters high on nothing but thoughts
I am too tired to care
 I seemed to be unplugged
I am doing cartwheels
 I seem to have a jagged spirit
I am the kid asking, "Where did all the good people go?"

Madisyn Schultz, Age 14

Ask the Poems

- What do you know about restlessness?
- In what ways do you recognize yourself?
- How are you a stranger to yourself?
- How does thought keep you company?
- What is the gift of limitations?

Sister Cat

Cat stands at the fridge,
Cries loudly for milk.
But I've filled her bowl.
Wild cat, I say, Sister,
Look, you have milk.
I clink my fingernail
Against the rim. Milk.
With down and liver,
A word I know she hears.
Her sad miaow. She runs
To me. She dips
In her whiskers but
Doesn't drink. As sometimes
I want the light on
When it is on. Or when
I saw the woman walking
toward my house and
I thought there's Frances.
Then looked in the car mirror
To be sure. She stalks
The room. She wants. Milk
Beyond milk. World beyond
This one, she cries.

By Frances Mayes, Adult author

Untitled

Lilacs drooped outside the open window,
almost brushing the starched white curtains.
The heady scent of blossoms and sun;
dizzy delirium.
We sipped white wine from paper cups
when your mother was out.
You wore silver rings on your fingers,
slender as birds,
and your hair was ruffled and bright
like the clouds we watched
from the hilltop.
I saw pale dragons and lacy dresses
and carriages of light.
You saw the blue space between.
You always did.

By Jemila Spain, Age 17

After the Winter

Some day, when trees have shed their leaves
And against the morning's white
The shivering birds beneath the eaves
Have sheltered for the night,
We'll turn our faces southward, love,
Toward the summer isle
Where bamboos spire the shafted grove
And wide-mouthed orchids smile.

And we will seek the quiet hill
Where towers the cotton tree,
And leaps the laughing crystal rill,
And works the droning bee.
And we will build a cottage there
Beside an open glade,
With black-ribbed bluebells blowing near,
And ferns that never fade.

By Claude McKay , Adult author

Ask
the
Poems

- Why do you let the seasons chase you?
- How do flowers know where they are?
- What can we do to see each other's visions?
- Is there ever an always or a never?
- Can we carry refuge with us?



Middle School Poetry

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A Sand Dollar

A sand dollar
has a lot of things.

If you see its face,
it has a small flower
that our dreams are ready to bloom from.

If you flip it over,
it has tall trees growing all over
where our dreams are aiming for the top.

If you hold it in your hand tightly, and close your eyes,
there is a giant coin
that brings you joy itself.

A sand dollar
has a lot of things.
But how does it carry all of those dreams?
No one knows how to answer it.
Yet within, it must carry all of those dreams.

By Alex Chae, 6th Grade

A Tree Within

A tree grew inside my head.
A tree grew in.
Its roots are veins,
its branches nerves,
thoughts its tangled foliage.
Your glance sets it on fire,
and its fruits of shade
are blood oranges
and pomegranates of flame.
Day breaks
in the body's night.

There, within, inside my head,
the tree speaks.
Come closer—can you hear it?

*By Octavio Paz, Adult author
Translated by Eliot Weinberger*

Ask the Poems

- What powers do close observation give you?
- What is it that you dream of?
- Where are you? What holds you there?
- What (soil, sand, neck, hand...?) supports your weight?
- What secret life do you imagine here?

Shell

Like a wind in the willows,
The audience at an opera,

Waves, smells, memories waft in and out

I hide under a blanket
And move my arms in the tangible dark
A cat's chin, soft and rough
His tongue like sand

A canyon, a tunnel, a shell

By Chelsea Ingram, Age 14

Out of Hiding

Someone said my name in the garden,

While I grew smaller
In the spreading shadow of the peonies,

Grew larger by my absence to another,
Grew older among the ants, ancient

Under the opening heads of the flowers,
New to myself, and stranger.

When I heard my name again, it sounded far,
Like the name of the child next door,
Or a favorite cousin visiting for the summer,

While the quiet seemed my true name,
A near and inaudible singing
Born of hidden ground.
Quiet to quiet, I called back.
And the birds declared my whereabouts all morning.

By Li-Young Lee, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Where are you?
- What makes you so mysterious?
- What are you feeling?
- Do you like to be alone?
- What will you do next?

Riddles

From the heat of the earth it rises,
And from dampened woods it falls.
It is not one color and not one size,
Comes from the ground, yet always flies.
It chokes and kills, but it clears the mind,
Always disappearing, yet easy to find.

Answer: Smoke

By Emily Mangan, Age 13

Untitled

If all but one deny me, I am not.
The Greeks had gods for everything but me.
Since then
How could I live on earth, in heaven? Yet see
If you can find me in the hearts of men.

Answer: Peace

By Daniel Hoffman, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Where will you go next?
- What is one of your happy memories?
- What are you afraid of?
- What is your favorite place to hang out?
- Where will I find you in my world?

Someday I'll Need To Find My Voice

Bold and outgoing at the first four periods
Talkative and jumpy at lunch
Still cheerful at fifth period,
When sixth period hits, I'm not myself,
Some part of me is missing...
My voice.
My voice is held captive by the whole class,
The students or the teachers didn't take it,
I gave it to them.
I am taller than many of them,
However, I am small,
I'm small in personality, small in experience,
Small in knowledge.
I'm like a snail,
Even though I try to move and retrieve my voice,
I seem to get nowhere.
All I see when I look up are the students' fuchsia
sneakers
Or their white Nike socks.
When the bell rings and I leave the land
Where everybody there has my voice,
My voice finds its way back to me.
I know someday I will need to find my voice
In my 6th grade math class.

By Jenny Koh, Age 11

The Lost Voice

In the forest a little girl looked for her voice.
She looked for it slowly, holding every moment
sacred, singing muted in the breeze, calling for
her voice as she wandered on.
A small bluegrass held her voice, for he could
not sing or talk, but only a whisper of a voice
on the wind. As the girl searched, the sun set,
washing a shadow of doubt through the trees.
"I do not wish to use it, only to see it safe,
for who wants a voice which is muted by the wind?"
In a lake the little girl looked for her voice, hiding
in a castle of mirrors, her voice a piece of
sand inside a dewdrop on a blade of bluegrass.

By Helen Wolfram, Age 13

The Little Mute Boy

The little mute boy was looking for his voice.
(The king of the crickets had it).
In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.

I do not want it for speaking with;
I will make a ring of it
so that he may wear my silence
on his little finger

In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.
(The captive voice, far away,
put on a cricket's clothes.)

*By Federico Lorca, Adult author
Translated by W.S. Merwin*

Ask the Poems

- What adventures does your voice go on without you?
- What noise can you make to call your voice back?
- In what ways can a voice be found in silence?
- Voice, what are other disguises you might use?

All We Have To Go By

Untitled

In the middle of the night, a snowstorm came with claws outstretched. It caught the clouds and tore them out of the sky. The clouds broke into a million pieces, like shattered glass, and flew into the air.

When the storm passed, the bits of clouds fell softly out of the sky, and onto the ground, creating a blanket of snow.

The fierce storm was gone, but it had left a reminder of its power. A bitter cold.

Anyone who stepped outside would get stung by invisible bees. Buzzing softly, they strayed to the road, creating a thick layer of ice.

When the sun comes out, it melts away the clouds. It creates new clouds. But there is still the cold. The bitter cold.

By Natalie Wong, Age 11

As if I had dreamed the snow
into falling,
I wake to a world
blanked out
in its particulars,
nearly erased.

This is the silence
of absolute whiteness—the mute
birds nowhere
in sight, the car
and animal tracks
filled in,

all boundaries,
as in love,
ambiguous.
Sometimes all we have
to go by
is the weather:

a message
the snow writes
in invisible ink,
what the sky means
by its litmus
colors.

Now my breath
on the chilly window
forms a cloud
which may turn to rain later,
somewhere else.

By Linda Pastan, Adult author

Ask
the
Poems

- How does the weather make the world unfamiliar?
- How can unfamiliarity be beautiful?
- How can unfamiliarity be scary?
- In what ways can weather change form?
- What other things can be shown but not seen?

Color

Where I go
It's colorful, rainbow
The lines are never straight
Always bent, or curved
Red trees
Orange flowers
Yellow grass
Green sheets
Blue pillows
Purple dishes
The edges aren't blurred
They're always in sharp relief
People can come
Once they accept who they are
Red shoes
Orange hair
Yellow nails
Green jacket
Blue jeans
Purple shirt
We cook food
We'll all enjoy
In my rainbow kitchen
Red spices
Orange noodles
Yellow chicken
Green vegetables
Blue fruits
Purple rice
It's a secret world
Where colors are cherished

By Maisie Titterington, 6th Grade

Lines

Draw a line. Write a line. There.
Stay in a line, hold the line, a glance
between the lines is fine but don't
turn corners, cross, cut in, go over
or out, between two points of no
return's a line of flight, between
two points of view's a line of vision.
But a line of thought is rarely
straight, an open line's no party
line, however fine your point.
A line of fire communicates, but drop
your weapons and drop your line,
consider the shortest distance from x
to y, let x be me, let y be you.

By Martha Collins, Adult author



- If you created one new rule, what would it be?
- Who are you talking to? What is he or she like?
- What is travel like to your world?
- What do I wear or say, what do I do to be welcomed there?

A Cup of Light

I set the table with forks of happiness and knives of hurt.
With plates and glasses.
I filled the glasses with rays of sunlight.
I spooned rice of life onto the plate.
I spread a sauce of worry over the rice.
I poured worry soup into the soup bowl.
Cake of sadness was my dessert.
I sat in my chair and ate and I ate.
My sadness disappeared.
My worries disappeared.
My hurt disappeared.
My happiness disappeared.
And all that was left was a cup full of light.

By Hannah Eshelman, Age 11

I am, O Anxious One

I am, O Anxious One. Don't you hear my voice surging forth with all my earthly feelings? They yearn so high that they have sprouted wings and whitely fly in circles around your face. My soul, dressed in silence, rises up and stands alone before you: can't you see? Don't you know that my prayer is growing ripe upon your vision, as upon a tree? If you are the dreamer, I am what you dream. But when you want to wake, I am your wish, and I grow strong with all magnificence and turn myself into a star's vast silence above the strange and distant city, Time.

*By Rainer Maria Rilke, Adult author
Translated by Stephen Mitchell*

Ask the Poems

- Whom are you speaking to?
- How do your feelings change?
- What is beautiful about disappearances?
- How can a dream become a feast?
- How else can silence be seen and felt?

Romance Boulevard

Green is the rippling river,
Green and gray. Green winds.
The bark is silent and somber.
Yellow birds fly to my forever.
This is my street of centuries,
I stand to greet that barrage,
green animals, blue flowers
make my beautiful pallet.
Green is the rippling rover,
Like a banjo, the moon sings,
A song of paradise and eternity
I sway gently to the pulse.

Green is the rippling river.
Big eyes search wild skies
upon a day of soul release
questioning the universe no more.
The hues of frost like ghosts
change the dark to light,
all stands still, spirits fly low,
rise above yourself.
When do we come? Why do we stay?
I cease to tell time,
green animals, blue flowers,
my soloist march in armor.

By Chelsea Ingram, Age 14

from Romance Sonambulo

Green, how much I want you green.
Green wind. Green branches.
The ship upon the sea
and the horse in the mountain.
With the shadow on her waist
she dreams on her balcony,
green flesh, hair of green,
and eyes of cold silver.
Green, how much I want you green.
Beneath the gypsy moon,
all things look at her
but she cannot see them.

Green, how much I want you green.
Great stars of white frost
come with the fish of
that opens the road of dawn.
The fig tree rubs the wind
with the sandpaper of its branches,
and the mountain, a filching cat,
bristles its bitter aloes.
But who will come? And from where?
She lingers on her balcony,
green flesh, hair of green,
dreaming of the bitter sea.

*By Federico Garcia Lorca, Adult author
Translated by Stephen Spender*

Ask the Poems

- Poems, why do you use the color green?
- What is it you are longing for?
- What is yellow?
- What journey would blue take us on in your magical world?

Varieties of Blue

A blue tear skims down her face,
in waterfalls, in oceans,
calming to my grandma's quilt,
ruffling into the sky.
Falling back as little raindrops,
turning into snow.
Forming into bright, calm crystals,
merging into bluebirds.
Disappearing into bluebirds' eggs,
crashing into petals blue.
Relaxing into a girl's favorite tie,
reaching down her face.

By Ashley Babcock, 6th Grade

Improvisation (Eching)

In the drizzle
the tractor pulls
the sea-gulls
in its wake
along a wet, black field.
The furrows, pleats
opened by the plough,
catch the light like waves.
One by one, the birds sheer
off abruptly,
but return to their place
in the sky, held there
like children's kites.

By Kevin Perryman, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What else can feel true even if it is not literally true?
- Who is watching these scenes? What else do they see?
- What emotions would the colors, here, around me, show you?
- I love your verbs! What verbs could help invent an opposite world?

On the Subject of Salvation

1. He held the ladder as she climbed,
a hammer stuck through the belt loop of her overalls,
bent nails clenched between her teeth.
2. Cats climb up
but they don't need ladders
to come back down.
3. When the footstool was too short
we lugged the self-supporting ladder across the lawn
and used an unbent wire hanger to snag the sun-touched fruit.
4. Rabbit is not so clever
that he can hide from Coyote in the moon
without using a ladder to get there.
5. Don't walk under ladders; it's bad luck.
It's only bad luck
if you brush through the ghosts hanging from the rungs.
6. The celestial plumber only uses ladders
made of the finest spider thread
when he needs to unplug the stars.
7. Bird song
is the ladder that teaches
the soul to rise each morning,
despite the fog weighing it down.

By Hannah Harris, Age 11

It Is Born

Here I came to the very edge
where nothing at all needs saying,
everything is absorbed through weather and the sea,
and the moon swam back,
its rays all silvered,
and time and again the darkness would be broken
by the crash of a wave,
and every day on the balcony of the sea,
wings open, fire is born, and everything is blue again like morning.

By Pablo Neruda, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What did you notice before you started the journey?
- What gifts do your journey give you?
- Poems, what do you want? What do you believe?
- What happens next, in the new beginning?
- What time and place will you dream up next?

I Am

I am a mirror
Reflecting other people's beauty
I never admire myself

I am an eel
Twisting, glimmering, spinning
Cut off from other fish

I am a chair
People use me to ward off lions
They put my life in danger to save
Their own

I am a house
One story, without even an attic
But instead with a basement to hide away my secrets

I am a broom
Cleaning up other people's messes
Sweeping forever without a dustpan

I am a rainbow
Admired, colorful, happy, a symbol of joy
Yet made out of nothing but water and light.

By Maisie Titterington, 6th Grade

Things

What happened is, we grew lonely
living among the things,
so we gave the clock a face,
the chair a back,
the table four stout legs
which will never suffer fatigue.

We fitted our shoes with tongues
as smooth as our own
and hung tongues inside bells
so we could listen
to their emotional language,

and because we loved graceful profiles
the pitcher received a lip,
the bottle a long, slender neck.

Even what was beyond us
was recast in our image;
we gave the country a heart,
the storm an eye,
the cave a mouth
so we could pass into safety.

By Lisel Mueller, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What is your connection between solitude and creative energy?
- How can “things” be positive or negative?
- What other items cause you to feel emotions?

The First Sky Is

Inside You

The first sky is inside you,
A shadow on a butterfly's cheek,
A story made of grapes,
A kiss flecked with chocolate,
Laughing the song of a thousand moons,
Dancing the love of a thousand suns,
Outside is the inside,
Inside is out,
Color and light blend
To create miraculous illusions
Where people have skin of blue quartz,
Topaz eyes,
And the ocean is fire.
The first sky is inside you,
Bigger than life,
Smaller than the cost of forgiveness.
The first sky is love,
Kept in a walnut
Or enclosing the universe,
Equal only to the smile
A mother gives
As she watches her child at play.
The first sky
And the last sky blend
Into one.

By Kayla Cassidy, Age 12

One Heart

Look at the birds. Even flying
is born

out of nothing. The first sky
is inside you, open

at either end of day.
The work of wings

was always freedom, fastening
one heart to every falling thing.

By Li-Young Lee, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What else is born out of nothing?
- What is the work of feet? Of hands?
- Poems, what is the opposite of sky in your world?
- What else is inside you?
- What can you let out?

Dear Young Owl

Dear young owl, heed my word,
If you're to live, this must be heard.
Fly high, fly low, like black shadow,
The mice will never know.
Mouse, vole, mole in hole,
Shrew and lizard bold,
Beware the owl, we don't howl,
Your head in our beak's hold.
If in barn your family lives,
Beware black rafter swiftly gives.

And if in tree your family dwells,
Watch for raccoon--danger swells.
Swoop down from the moonlit sky,
The mice will never know how they die.
Crush the head, break the neck,

To me that mouse is just a speck.
Someday soon you'll leave the nest,
And put your skills to the test.
So spread your wings and find a home,
'Cause soon, young owl, you're on your own.

By Rachael Edwards, Age 11

White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field

Coming down
out of the freezing sky
with its depths of light,
like an angel,
or a buddha with wings,
it was beautiful
and accurate,
striking the snow and whatever was there
with a force that left the imprint
of the tips of its wings--
five feet apart--and the grabbing
thrust of its feet,
and the indentation of what had been running
through the white valleys
of the snow--

and then it rose, gracefully,
to lurk there,
like a little lighthouse,
in the blue shadows--
so I thought:
maybe death
isn't darkness, after all,
but so much light
wrapping itself around us--

as soft as feathers--
that we are instantly weary
of looking and looking and shut our eyes,
not without amazement
and let ourselves be carried,
as through the translucence of mica,
to the river
that is without the least dapple or shadow--
that is nothing but light--scalding, aortal light--
in which we are washed and washed
out of our bones.

Ask
the
Poems

By Mary Oliver, Adult author

- Owls, are you masks Death wears? Who else wears your mask?
- What advise do you give old owls?
- You seem so skilled and graceful, what makes you clumsy?
- What is it like to strike and fly away?

Doorways

She started out
walking through the small stretch of light,
collecting the brightest spots,
the glittering dust,
sweeping up cobwebs.

She moves to the darkness,
collecting the darkest shadows,
the deepest of black.
She lies on the floor to collect fallen tears.

She ends in an attic
she's never seen
in front of a door
with claw marks on the edges.

She takes the light,
the dust from the dreams
and rubs them into the cracks.
She takes the shadows and sweeps them
across
the door
like lifting a curtain.

She forms the tears and cobwebs into a key
and opens the door
that leads to all the words
she needs.

By Brynne Web, 8th Grade

The Gathering Evening

Shadows are the patient apprentices of everything.
They follow what might be followed,

Sit with what will not move.
They take notes all day long--

We don't pay attention, we don't see
The dark writing of the pencil, the black notebook.

Sometimes, if you are watching carefully,
A shadow will move. You will turn to see

What has made it move, but nothing.
The shadows transcribe all night.

Transcription is their sleep.
We mistake night as a setting of the sun:

Night is all of them comparing notes,
So many gathering that their crowd

Makes darkness everything.
Patient, patient, quiet and still.

One day they will have learned it all.
One day they will step out, in front,

And we will follow them, be their shadows,
And work for our turn--

The centuries it takes
To learn what waiting has to teach

By Alberto Ríos, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- In what ways do darkness lead to new openings?
- What is another way to show transformation through patience?
- What are other unexpected qualities of darkness?
- What else can you gather up that might empower you?

Pomegranates

I thought it would be easy
but it wasn't. It was so loud
and all of the noise was noise
I didn't understand. Everyone speeding past
me. And all I could do was watch
and listen. I sat on a swing and watched.

It wasn't what I was used to:
no fields, no pine trees, no salty taste
in the air. Instead, dark roads of stone.
The streets were quiet, not like back home,
and old and smokey, too. Carvings showing
pomegranates, the fruit of Granada.

By Kate Gladhart-Hayes, Age 11

The Song

From somewhere
a calm musical note arrives.
You balance it on your tongue,
a single ripe grape,
till your whole body glistens.
In the space between breaths
you apply it to any wound
and the wound heals.

Soon the nights will lengthen,
you will lean into the year
humming like a saw.
You will fill the lamps with kerosene,
knowing somewhere a line breaks,
a city goes black,
people dig for candles in the bottom drawer.
You will be ready. You will use the song like a match.
It will fill your rooms
opening rooms of its own
so you sing, I did not know
my house was this large.

By Naomi Shihab Nye, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What do you do to bring home with you wherever you travel?
- If words had a taste, what would the name of this place taste like?
- What would the word, home taste like?
- Where is the silence coming from?

The River

The river ran bright under the trees.
Under the longing trees ran a bright river.
Fish swam through the river overlooked by trees.
Trees watched stones skip through the bright river.
Shadows ran from the brightness in the river.
Sparkling brightness ran around the trees.
The trees ran with the water.
The bright water longed to be dark.
The river walked with brightness.
Trees dipped hands in brightness.
Fish jumped brightly from the water into trees.
Trees swam in the bright river.
Trees slowly drank from the water.
Decomposing trees ran through the bright water.

By Rayna Viles, Age 13

Dream Cycle

In the dream I was asked to choose
between sky and earth, water and air.
The sky was wide and blue, warm each day,
the earth cool and dry, sweet-scented.
Between sky and earth, water and air
I could make no choice, loving them all.
The earth was cool and dry, sweet-scented.
Juniper and sage covered the hills.
I could make no choice, loving them all--
the creek ran clear like the beginning of the world,
juniper and sage covered the hills.
I wanted to breathe in every shimmering light.
The creek ran clear like the beginning of the world,
and a west wind bent the prairie grass.
I wanted to breathe in every shimmering light.
The whole world was fiercely alive--
and a west wind bent the prairie grass.
In high meadows, wild iris opened.
The whole world was fiercely alive!
Far above, an eagle was circling;
in high meadows, wild iris opened.
The sky was wide and blue, warm each day;
far above, an eagle was circling--
in the dream I was asked to choose.

By Janice Gould, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What kinds of opposites live in you?
- How do you define darkness?
- What does the water long for? The sky?
- What would your trees choose?

Harvesting Thoughts

I see a trash can
Sitting on the ground
I watch a top
Spin round and round
I write it down
I see dew
Roll off the grass
I watch lightning whip and flash
I write it down
I listen to the sounds of the city
I think of feelings
Joys and pity
I write it all down
For this is my pastime
It's what I do lots
Because that's
How I write
By harvesting thoughts

By Anonymous, Age 11

Between Walls

the back wings
of the
hospital where
nothing
will grow lie
cinders
in which shine
the broken
pieces of a green
bottle

By William Carlos Williams, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Why are you paying attention to such ordinary things?
- Poems, what happens next in your world?
- What kinds of things would you pay attention to at my house? At your own?
- Who do you want to send your words to? Why?
- What are your emotions? What would change them?



Elementary School Poetry

Young Writers Association Elementary School Writers

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Ode to My Feet

Ode to my feet, my roots to
the ground. My propellers whizzing
me through icy cold pools.
My motors running me down
the street. You may be smelly,
but thank you feet.

By Carly Ferguson, Age 10

Ode to My Socks

Maru Mori brought me
a pair
of socks
knitted with her own
shepherd's hands,
two socks soft
as rabbits.
I slipped
my feet into them
as if
into
jewel cases
woven
with threads of
dusk
and sheep's wool.

Audacious socks,
my feet became
two woolen
fish,
two long sharks
of lapis blue
shot
with a golden thread,
two mammoth blackbirds,
two cannons,
thus honored
were
my
feet
by
these
celestial
socks.

By Pablo Neruda, Adult author

Ask the Poems

Poem, what would you say about my shoes?
How do your hands connect you to the world around you?
What is the next step you will take?
Where do you go to rest?

Stars

Every night I go outside and
say the magic words big dipper
milky way and then they come down
and say go to sleep, close your eyes
and when they come down I feel
safe from every harming thing and
when I fall asleep they bring me
to my bed, then they go up to
the sky with all sorts of colors
falling from them.

By Audrey Thomas, 4th grade

Milky Way

When I was a boy, the Milky Way
Floated just over the City
Of Boston, so I was lucky to live
In that place, that
House where my father lathered
His face & like the moon
Went out, came back, walking
Winter nights beneath
The Milky Way. Few thoughts,
Few fears, a way of
Sleeping through the night.

When my son lay sewn
To the sheets, adrift in his
Diabetic coma among
The blown, seductive stars,
I could not think of
Anything to say, for he was
Not anywhere nearby.
He said Papa & came back.
Tonight in his play
He captains a sleek starship
Toward the Milky Way.

When I was a boy, the City of
Boston lay miles away
Within our sight. Evenings we
Set our chairs upon
The lawn & talked. Few thoughts,
A way of watching until
Dark. Then as our small wickers
Floated through the night
I wished I might be taken away
To live forever in that
Distant City made wholly of light.

By Jon Anderson, Adult author

Ask the Poems

If the stars came down disguised as people, what would they wear?
What would they do? What would their voices sound like?
What if your lawn chair did float up under the stars: what would the journey be like?
What magic words would you say when the stars are covered by clouds?

Dark Night

Oh dark, dark night, what are your secrets?
Oh dark, dark night, why are you there?
Are you there to make everyone's despair just suddenly
leave?
Are you there to make one happy?
Or are you just there to make one wonder,
and have courage?
Oh dark, dark night, why are you there?
Oh dark, dark night.

By Dawson Rutledge, Age 9

The Shadow Inside Me

Night has driven the shadow
into my own body. It's an inward
robe that stretches its arms

and legs into my limbs, whispers
like silk along my spine,
turns darker and darker until it

finally comes off in me as the color
of sleep, behind whose eyelids
two black flames are flickering.

By Tommy Olofsson, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What do poems do in the dark while humans are sleeping?
- When has the darkness of night helped you? How might it help you in the future?
- If you could invite night-time and day-time over to your house to play, what games would they choose? Who do you think would win?
- What other creatures (real or imaginary) might become stronger or more comfortable at night? How would they show this?

At Home in the Woods

I remember running
with my dad in the woods.
In the forest I can breathe out--
Here, come join us,
out where you can breathe.
Come run with us,
breathe out.
Breathe in the woods
where troubles don't exist.

By Kory Lander, Age 10

When All Thoughts

When all thoughts
Are exhausted
I slip into the woods
And gather
A pile of shepherd's purse.

Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too, quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

By Ryokan, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What is it about the woods that bring you such feelings of peace and joy?
- If you found an animal in the woods, what animal would it be? Why?
- Do you carry the feeling of peace home with you after being in the woods?
- How can you find peaceful feelings even when you are far away from the woods?

Running Away

When my friend Hannah and I were four we decided to run away.

In her sister's red wagon we put a dress, four dollars that we took from a bowl in the kitchen, an old pie tin full of mud that we stuck daisies in, an old tablecloth and a yoyo.

Hannah lived really close to Prince Pucklers so we could run away there.

We put on our shoes and started walking, stopping a couple of times to put things back in the wagon as they fell out.

When we got to Prince Pucklers, we bought ice cream from a surprised employee.

On the way back to my friend's house we pretended to camp on the grass next to the sidewalk.

Running away was immensely fun and since we were only four we thought we actually ran away even though it was only for a half an hour.

By Madeleine Peara, 5th Grade

A Clearing

What lies at the end of enticing
country driveways, curving
off among trees? Often only
a car graveyard, a house-trailer,
a trashy bungalow. But this one,
for once, brings you
through the shade of its green tunnel
to a paradise of cedars,
of lawns mown but not too closely,
of iris, moss, fern, rivers of stone rounded
by sea or stream,
of a wooden unassertive large-windowed
house.

The big trees enclose
an expanse of sky, trees and sky
together protect the clearing.
One is sheltered here
from the assaultive world
as if escaped from it, and yet
once arrived, is given (oneself
and others being a part of that world)
a generous welcome.

It's a paradise

as a paradigm for how
to live on earth,
how to be private and open
quiet and richly eloquent.
Everything man-made here
was truly made by the hands
of those who live here, of those
who live with what they have made.
It took time, and is growing still
because it's alive.

It is a paradise, and paradise
is a kind of poem; it has
a poem's characteristics:
inspiration; starting with the given;
unexpected harmonies; revelations.
It's rare among
the worlds one finds
at the end of enticing driveways.

By Denise Levertov, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What are other paradises?
- When you come home after your journey, is home where you left it?
- Do places change you, or do you change places?
- What is the taste on your tongue?
- How long can you stop before you start again?

Untitled

Somehow
when a lion goes to sleep,
I think of wild.
When the lion cub bends
down to drink from the dangerous
river,
when the king lion roars his
thunderous
“I am the boss” roar,
I think of wild.
When the crickets cricket
while we sleep,
and a car starts its engine,
I think of wild.
When a new baby is born,
I think of a new kind of wild
coming into the world.

By Renee Lee, Age 10

A Meeting

She steps into the dark swamp
where the long wait ends.
The secret slippery package
drops to the weeds.
She leans her long neck and tongues it
between breaths slack with exhaustion
and after awhile it rises and becomes a creature
like her, but much smaller.
So now there are two. And they walk together
like a dream under the trees.
In early June, at the edge of a field
thick with pink and yellow flowers
I meet them.
I can only stare.
She is the most beautiful woman
I have ever seen.
Her child leaps among the flowers,
the blue of the sky falls over me
like silk, the flowers burn, and I want
to live my life all over again, to begin again,
to be utterly
wild.

By Mary Oliver, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- If you began again, utterly wild, what would you be?
- Wild can be very loud, and wild can be very quiet. What are the loudest wildnesses?
- What are the most quiet? Which do you think are the most awesome?
- Can you find a secret wild in an ordinary place, say, your house? The library? Your classroom? A box of crayons? Wild where people usually think there isn't any...?

Chain of the Week

Monday is a hassle, a land of
volcanoes all around. Tuesday
is a world of accomplishment.
Wednesday, a world of wonders
and the shortest day. Thursday
is a haunting night with
ghosts and ghouls everywhere.
Friday,
a much safer day. Saturday
is a day of no work.
Sunday, please don't go.

By Kaleb Crouch, 3rd grade

This Room

The room I entered was a dream of this room.
Surely all those feet on the sofa were mine.
The oval portrait
of a dog was me at an early age.
Something shimmers, something is hushed up.
We had macaroni for lunch every day
except Sunday, when a small quail was induced
to be served to us. Why do I tell you these things?
You are not even here.

By John Ashbery, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- If the days ever changed from their usual ways, what would that be like?
- On what kind of day do you wish you'd been born? On what kind of day do you look for secret luck?
- What do each of the days dream about?
- If each day were a box, of what would it be made?

A hint of Spring

A Hint of Spring
Rainy days,
leaves falling,
Murky, muddy water,
Soft ground,
damp sticks,
ripples in the puddles,
Animals trying to find warm places,
Children jumping in puddles,
Muddy hikes,
Throwing pebbles.

By Malia Labrousse, 4th Grade

The Rainy Summer

There's much afoot in heaven and earth this year;
The winds hunt up the sun, hunt up the moon,
Trouble the dubious dawn, hasten the drear
Height of a threatening noon.
No breath of boughs, no breath of leaves, of
fronds,
May linger or grow warm; the trees are loud;
The forest, rooted, tosses in her bonds,
And strains against the cloud.
No scents may pause within the garden-fold;
The rifled flowers are cold as ocean shells;
Bees, humming in the storm carry their cold
Wild honey to cold cells.

By Alice Meynell, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Who is happiest in these blustery, unseasonable worlds?
- What do the damp sticks say to the soft ground? What do the loud trees shout to each other? To the clouds?
- What secret do the children find on their muddy hike? What secret do the bees discover in the wet flowers?
- Who arrives unexpectedly in weather like this and do they join in the wet wildness or do they bring something new?

Thunder

Cami: Thunder, can I
hear your beautiful
sound?
You are the
heartbeat of
The earth. Oh,
please, thunder,
where do you get
that wonderful noise?
Thunder: I get it from your joy.

By Cameron Cota, 4th Grade

The Sound of the Sea

The Sound of the Sea
The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,
And round the pebbly beaches far and wide
I heard the first wave of the rising tide
Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;
A voice out of the silence of the deep,
A sound mysteriously multiplied
As of a cataract from the mountain's side,
Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.
So comes to us at times, from the unknown
And inaccessible solitudes of being,
The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;
And inspirations, that we deem our own,
Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing
Of things beyond our reason or control.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- When does your soul sound like thunder and seas?
- What do thunder and water feel as they rush and roar?
- If you could make a collection of sounds, what other sounds would you choose?
- What do thunder and water dream when they are quiet? What do they say when they whisper?

Untitled

Silently gliding across the sea,
sea is all that's surrounding me,
on it I feel peaceful and free,
on the mysterious graceful sea.

I felt like a lock without a key
I felt like a garden without the trees
I felt like white flowers without the bees
but then I discovered the great blue sea
and then I just knew that it was the key
to the used-to-be keyless lock in me.

By Emma Shortt, Age 10

The Place I Want to Get Back

to is where
in the pinewoods
in the moments between
the darkness

and first light
two deer
came walking down the hill
and when they saw me

they said to each other, okay,
this one is okay,
let's see who she is
and why she is sitting

on the ground, like that,
so quiet, as if
asleep, or in a dream,
but, anyway, harmless;

and so they came
on their slender legs
and gazed upon me
not unlike the way

I go out to the dunes and look
and look and look
into the faces of the flowers;
and then one of them leaned forward

and nuzzled my hand, and what can my life
bring to me that could exceed
that brief moment?
For twenty years

I have gone every day to the same woods,
not waiting, exactly, just lingering.
Such gifts, bestowed,
can't be repeated.

If you want to talk about this
come to visit. I live in the house
near the corner, which I have named
Gratitude.

By Mary Oliver, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- When you discovered your gift, how did it change you?
- How would your life be different if this hadn't happened?
- How do you hold onto or let go of your gift?
- Who is still locked out? Who do you invite in? How would you invite them?

Hiding

A caterpillar hides his true self and thrilling beauty in a hiding place. As he hides in a shell, he decides to stop hiding and bursts out. His true self is a thrilling butterfly.

The seed hides her sweet scent and beauty in a hiding place. She hides in the ground, coming out little by little and then she comes out as a sweet smelling pink rose.

Hannah Yi, Age 10

Out of Hiding

Someone said my name in the garden,

while I grew smaller
in the spreading shadow of the peonies,

grew larger by my absence to another,
grew older among the ants, ancient

under the opening heads of the flowers,
new to myself, and stranger.

When I heard my name again, it sounded far,
like the name of the child next door,
or a favorite cousin visiting for the summer,

while the quiet seemed my true name,
a near and inaudible singing
born of hidden ground.

Quiet to quiet, I called back.
And the birds declared my whereabouts all morning.

Li-Young Lee, Adult author

- Poem, where are you?
- Why were you hiding?
- When no one knows where you are, can you be anything you want?
- Who do you wish would find you?

The Junkyard of Forgotten Treasures

In the junkyard of forgotten treasures
a bird's nest lay calmly, waiting
waiting for a bird to rest on its twigs.
A picture of two men in berets
sits lonely, worn by rain.
Church bells lay hopelessly,
silently pleading to be rung.
A cardboard box
that's never been used
lays underneath something broken.
Smoke billows from the fire,
a fire that never burns out.
A delivery truck
comes every day
and throws in more wasted treasure
from an old photo of cliff divers
to a diamond ring,
from a book that's never been read,
to an old bottle
that was thrown away,
its juice still inside.

By Ashley Babcock, Age 11

Mrs. Lyons

She could untie the dawn, Mrs. Lyons,
and out would come a bird born

in a cardboard box or an orange
that unpeels itself. She kept in her red

breast pocket a postcard of cliff
divers in Hawaii and a white nest

made of her handkerchief.
Her voice was as old as churchbells,

her hair billowing chimney smoke,
her heart and veins little girls

jumping rope. When she looked
at you, you'd see rain

penetrating the earth with its
soft voice. Her hands were two

old men talking excitedly in French,
berets riding the world of ideas.

This moment is the broken thing,
Mrs. Lyons.

Please come back and teach me again
what you once did in 6th grade.

By Rebecca Childers, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What is the most valuable treasure a poem can own?
- How is it possible for something you never see or touch to be the thing you treasure most?
- Can you imagine a new scene including birds, berets and church bells?
- If you could unpeel yourself like an orange or be opened like a book (that's never been read) which would you choose? What would we find inside?
- How does rain change you? Do you fade, shine, or react in your own unique way?

I K n e w a Cloud

I knew a cloud when I walked in the cold, wet mist of fog.
It swirled around me laughing.
I watched for a moment, thinking
Should I scream and run inside?
Should I stay and play with it?
Should I stand here and watch?
What should I do?
The snow-white cloud touches its cold mist against my cheek.
It turns it as red as a blossoming cherry.
Soon the cloud swirls high into the sky
and blows itself away with the others.
I watch for a while and then turn and run to catch up with my brother
and walk the rest of the way to school.
I always look for the cloud now and want to know its name.

By Kate Henley, Age 9

from The Nature of Clouds

There is a cloud on my house.

The cloud has arrived in strings and wisps and ringlets.
When I step outside my house, the cloud is on me.

What color is the cloud? Pink and gray.

What does the cloud taste like? Rhododendron.

What does the cloud think? Hill. The cloud thinks about leaving
this hill. The cloud misses the ocean.

When I open my front door, pieces of cloud waft into the house.
The pieces float among sofas and chairs.

Now the cloud is stuck inside my house and I am sad for the
cloud. I open the back door to let it move on.
The rest of the cloud streams through my house. It touches
papers with its moist breathing. It swipes against walls and
makes them shine.

By Penelope Schott, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Poem, what feelings are you sharing with me?
- What questions are you asking?
- What if clouds and people changed places?
- How can people and clouds speak to each other?

Under Water

Water, plata water. Your shimmers glisten dimly under a bright azul blaze.
You have no true color. Yet you are still mysteriously gorgeous.
You slyly move quickly as you pose for a painting.
Water, plata water. How beautifully you shine.
Under the blazing lights of red, orange and yellow.
You move with such grace and agility.
Water, plata water. How beautiful you glimmer.
You glimmer, shimmer so beautiful people stop and stare.
You move peacefully, serene.

By Adriana Ripley, Age 9

On The Breakwater

On the breakwater in the summer dark, a man and a
girl are sitting,
She across his knee and they are looking face into face
Talking to each other without words, singing rhythms in
silence to each other.

A funnel of white ranges the blue dusk from an out-
going boat,
Playing its searchlight, puzzled, abrupt, over a streak of
green,
And two on the breakwater keep their silence, she on his
knee.

By Carl Sandburg, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What makes the water like a friend?
- What does the color of the water mean to you?
- What would you consider to be an opposite color and feeling?
- If it were a different time of day, how would the water describe itself to retain the same feeling?

Sahalie Falls

Splashes dampen spring green moss
Singing river lava cliffs
Always moving never rest
Rushing river rolling home

Otter, dipper, chipmunk too
Play beside the river blue
Softly floating rainbow mist
Rushing river rolling home

Laughing dancing waterfall
Surrounded by the trees so tall
Alder maple cedar fir
Rushing river rolling home.

By Sahalie Pittman, Age 10

Some Things, Say the Wise Ones

Some things, say the wise ones who know everything,
are not living. I say,
you live your life your way and leave me alone.
I have talked with the faint clouds in the sky when they
are afraid of being left behind; I have said, Hurry, hurry!
and they have said: thank you, we are hurrying.
About cows, and starfish, and roses, there is no
argument. They die, after all.
But water is a question, so many living things in it,
but what is it, itself, living or not? Oh, gleaming
generosity, how can they write you out?
As I think this I am sitting on the sand beside
the harbor. I am holding in my hand
small pieces of granite, pyrite, schist.
Each one, just now, so thoroughly asleep.

By Mary Oliver, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Does the water enjoy changing directions, or is it something to grumble about?
- If I jumped into your water, how would my life be different and how would it be the same?
- How do you speak to the water? Has it taught you its language?
- What makes water feel so generous or inviting to you?

Finding Darkness for Hannah Burge

I would gather darkness from
a black sharpie
under my bed
a cave

I would gather darkness from
my mouth
behind a star
solar eclipse

I would put it in a blow-up beach ball.
The beach ball is green and blue with pictures of
animals.

I would put a green plastic piece in the hole.
I would give the darkness to Hannah Burge
because she has been watching her little sister.
I would find Hannah at her house, in her room,
watching her little sister.
When I give it to her she says what is it? A beach
ball?

By Sierra Lambert, 4th grade

If Each Day Falls

If each day falls
inside each night,
there exists a well
where clarity is imprisoned.

We need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience.

By Pablo Neruda, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- How does darkness help you?
- Is there anything darkness shows you that can't be seen in the light?
- How do light and darkness get along with each other?
- Does light make darkness hide? Do you think it's a game they play?
- What does fallen light look like?

Life

Coffee grains hot and cold

like the blue glass as shiny
as a paper clip

smooth as a red silk scarf

as soft as fluffy cat fur

as steam comes from the
candle wax

and like the agate as
hard as a thunder egg

just sitting there like
the keyboard

By Ian Hopper, 5th Grade

Some Things, Say the Wise Ones

Some things, say the wise ones who know everything,
are not living. I say
you live your life your way and leave me alone.

I have talked with the faint clouds in the sky when they
are afraid of being left behind; I have said, Hurry, hurry!
and they have said: Thank you, we are hurrying.

About cows, and starfish, and roses, there is no
argument. They die, after all.

But water is a question, so many living things in it,
but what is it, itself, living or not? Oh, gleaming

generosity, how can they write you out?

As I think this I am sitting on the sand beside
the harbor. I am holding in my hand
small pieces of granite, pyrite, schist.
Each one, just now, so thoroughly asleep.

Mary Oliver, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- Poems, when do you sleep?
- When you bump into each other, do your parts get mixed up?
- Do poems need maps?
- Are there other images you want to embrace?
- What kind of birthdays do you celebrate?

Danger

Danger is the lightning in my heart,
The dying weapon used on us.
You danger are the bullet landing and
the unbreakable tears.
Or the black hole swallowing my soul.
You are the family fights or the homework
problems.
And even the huge fire burning down
all existing life on earth.
Danger you're unbearable for me.

By Paloma Deinum-Buck, Age 9

Negotiations with a Volcano

We will call you "Agua" like the rivers and cool jugs.
We will persuade the clouds to nestle around your neck
so you may sleep late.
We would be happy if you slept forever.
We will tend the slopes we plant, singing the songs
our grandfathers taught us before we inherited their fear.
We will try not to argue among ourselves.

Please think of us as we are, tiny, with skins that burn easily.
Please notice how we have watered the shrubs around our
houses
and transplanted the peppers into neat tin cans.
Forgive any anger we feel toward the earth,
when the rains do not come, or they come too much,
and swallow our corn.
It is not easy to be this small and live in your shadow.

Naomi Shihab Nye, Adult author

Ask the Poems

- What is the most frightening thing that could happen to a poem?
- How would you talk to the thing you feared most? What language would you use?
- Could you be rescued by clouds? In what way could they help or hinder you?

YWA Writing Mentors

The teaching writers who lead the after school writing groups and the in-school creative writing residencies for YWA choose a student poem and partner it with a published poem on a similar theme. They add questions students and teachers may choose to ask the poems in order to get to know the poems a little better and to be inspired to write poems of their own in response.

Kelly Terwilliger is a poet and storyteller who inspires and intrigues kids throughout Eugene and beyond. She holds a Master's degree in English Literature and is a published poet and children's writer. One of her stories has been made into a picture book and a second is due to be published soon. Other stories have appeared in Spider Magazine, and her poems have appeared in many literary magazines. She has also recently published a collection of poems, and meets regularly with local poets to work on new ones. Kelly works with YWA's In-School and after school Programs, WILCS, and YES!YEA! Days.

Nina Kiriki Hoffman has sold more than two hundred stories and a number of novels. Her works have been finalists for the Nebula, World Fantasy, Mythopoeic, Sturgeon, and Endeavour awards. *A STIR OF BONES*, a young adult fantasy novel, made the American Library Association list of books for the teen reader, and the New York Public Library list of books for teens. Nina lives in Oregon and has cats. She works with YWA's In-School Programs and Teen Outdoor Writing Camp.

Carter McKenzie is a poet whose work has appeared in a number of publications, including Chain, Fireweed, Raising Our Voices: an anthology of Oregon poets against the war, and *Dona Nobis Pacem: Grant Us Peace*. She is the author of *Naming Departure*, a chapbook of poetry published by Traprock Books. In 2007 she and three other poets cofounded the poetry collective Airlie Press, whose titles include Carter's *Out of Refusal*. Carter works with YWA's In-School Programs, Outdoor Teen Camp, and WILCS.

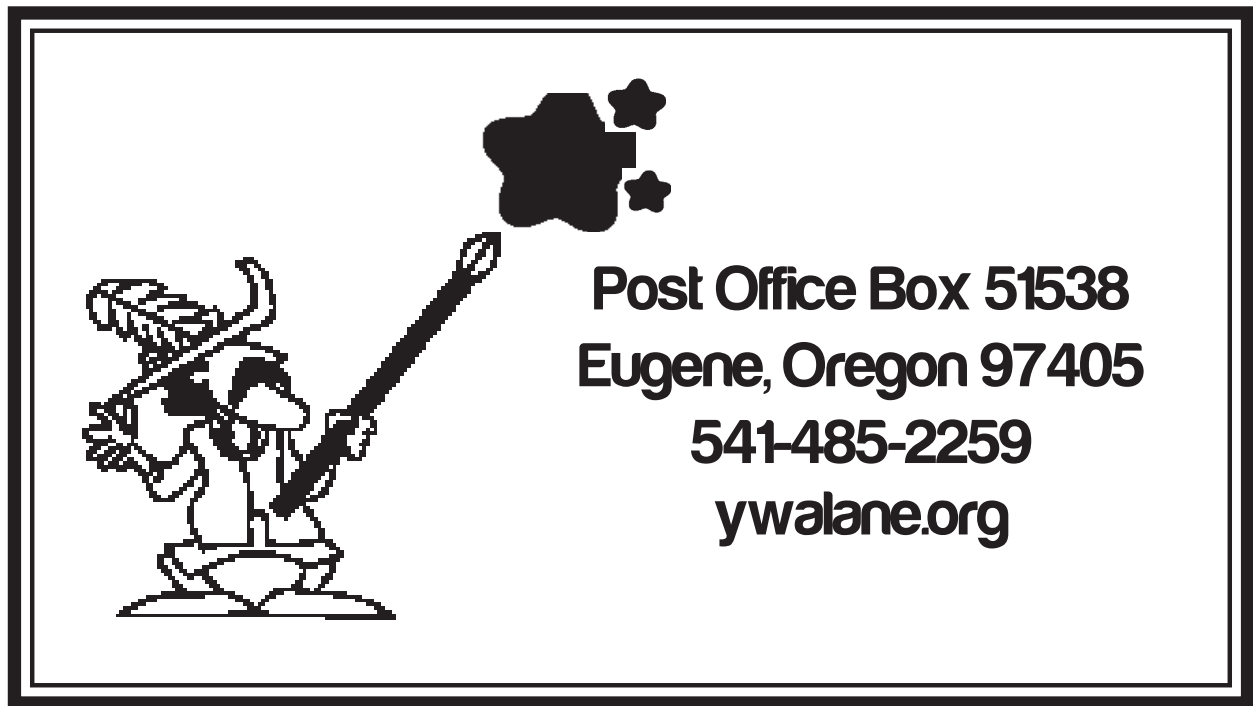
Cecelia Hagen has poems in a variety of journals and websites, including Poet & Critic, Northwest Review, *Caféine Destiny*, *Pedestal*, and *Natural Bridge*. Her work has won awards from Literary Arts and the journal *Passager*. She has taught writing at the UO's Super Summer program and for YWA, as well as at Willamette University. Currently she teaches memoir writing to adults, occasional classes for YWA, including its Teen Outdoor Camp, and the Writers in Lane County Schools program.

Sallie Vandagriff first set foot on Oregon soil 18 years ago, fresh from California. After a week of drinking coffee in a northwest café, reading, and scribbling constantly in her notebook, she knew she could never go back to living any other way. She is a literary fiction and creative nonfiction writer, teacher, and a mother of five. Her short stories have appeared in *The Sun*, and *Coffee Talk*. She is currently studying Comparative Literature and Creative Writing at University of Oregon. Sallie was a 2011 intern with YWA's Lively Lit Summer Camps and looks forward to continued work with YWA.

Shannon Sprouse taught for UO Talented & Gifted programs Super Saturday and Summer Enrichment Program, for YWA's Lively Literature Camps and Mess With Words program, as well as for the Science Factory Hands On Children's Museum. Currently a college student, Shannon is an inspired teacher who first wrote and published with YWA as an 11 year old.

Louisa Lindsay-Sprouse, the founding director of Young Writers Association, shares literature based curricula developed for YWA programs. Called a visionary in arts education, under her direction, YWA has received numerous awards for significant contributions to the cultural life of the community. Louisa has provided literary arts explorations, as both leisure time enrichment and vital learning in classrooms, for teacher groups and intergenerational groups, as well as to teachers-in-training at the University of Oregon. Experienced in addressing educational standards, Louisa has aligned curriculum to benchmarks in Oregon's arts standards for Oregon Public Education Network and for Lane Education Service District. She also publishes youth, and brings poetry and prose by mixed age writers to public radio. Louisa produces the mixed age literary festival, *Glitterary Word Festival*. She is a storyteller/poet who simply finds pleasure in sharing her love for words, imagination and the adventure of learning. Louisa also directs YWA's YES!YEA! Days and Lively Lit Camps to give students opportunities to explore stories in lively ways.

Young Writers Association



Stirring up literary play in youth and community