

I Asked

I asked
I asked the sky why it was blue
And it smiled and blew out clouds of white
I asked the night why it was dark
And it reached out to me and sprinkled lights across the sky
I asked the sun why it was there
And it cried and set and the moon rose
I asked the tree to bloom
And it twisted and the blossoms burst
I asked the wind to blow
And it did and the flowers were blown away
I asked the plants why they grew
And they whispered and wilted
I asked myself what was wrong
And the sky darkened
The stars dulled
The wind blew
And I kept quiet
And everything was perfect.

Khatsini Simani, age 11
Seattle, Washington
Lakeside Middle School
Teacher: Lance King

Deer Print

Deer Print
A soft indentation—
two toes—
marks the ground,
a blank reminder
of what has been here before me.
I try to feel amazed,
to marvel at this muddy imprint,
to feel lucky at my chance notice—
but I want to see the deer,
steam streaming from her nostrils
as she stares at me,
thin legs threatening
to give way,
small brown head
trembling in the cold.
I want to see her bound away,
her tail high in the air,
her two-toed hooves
marking the ground.

Benjamin F. Williams, age 12
Westport Island, Maine
Center for Teaching and Learning (Edgecomb)
Teacher: Marianne Williams

Thirst
Thirst, how I thirst to be loved.
To be held
To be full like a river after the snow melts.
Or a puddle after the rain.
Thirst.
My grandmother says blessed are those who thirst
after righteousness for they will be filled.
Oh how I want to be full
Thirst.

Clarence Adams, age 17
Washington, DC
Cesar Chavez High School
Teacher: Margot DeFerranti

THE MONKEY'S RAINCOAT PRIZE
(honoring a short poem in the Japanese haiku tradition)

I have used up all
of my river.
Nothing is left but the stones.

Oona Lyons, age 16
Fairfax, California
Marin Homeschoolers' Poetry Group
Teacher: Devika Brandt

Rain

Lightning dances beneath the tumbling surface
of furrowed, thundering clouds
and suddenly, the fever breaks
droplets pour
and collect in my hands.
Of all the words in the English language
these have fallen together
to form
one small gift.

Bethany Bernard, age 18
Sugar Hill, Georgia
N. Gwinnett High School (Suwanee)
Teacher: John Bush

Applelicious

The juicy crispness,
The golden taste,
Makes the orchard
A delicious place.
The impatience
Of winter, summer, and spring
To wait for this treat,
And the pleasure it brings.
The way it fills you,
With life and love,
Some of the gifts
Of the trees above.
The agony of waiting
For another whole year,
Until finally!
Apple season is here.

Abby Braiman, age 10
Horseheads, New York
Chemung Valley Montessori School (Elmira)
Teacher: Sheila Reed

My Stream

The stream has a name,
she whispers it to me,
while quietly gurgling past.
She tells me how big the world is,
she tells me how small infinity can be,
she talks about sadness,
and about happiness.
She tells me that we all die,
but not her.
She tells me about the deer
who drink with grace from her low banks.
She knows each beaver,
each fish,
each human ear willing to listen.
The stream has a name,
she tells me how small we really are.
She has a voice.
Listen

.Molly C. Brown, age 14
Peterborough, New Hampshire
South Meadow School
Teacher: Sue Morash

Moon Whisper

Sea brushes my
Face with a silver light
Reflects off
Gentle curves
Of ocean
Full cheeks
In
Wide grin
Shine
On
Blue
Canvas

Lake Buckley, age 13
Mill Valley, California
Greenwood School
Teacher: Devika Brandt
(2004 Teacher of the Year)

Just Itself

I like how nature is not perfect
how some leaves have little bites,
how tree branches grow in curves
I like how bugs have hide-outs too
how they crawl under the dirt,
just a little way under
I like how nature has its own sounds,
sounds that can be there
when you want them to be,
sounds that disappear when you need silence
I like how nature has no rules,
the plants free to be wild
free to grow where they want
how they want
I like how nature is interesting,
new plants and new flowers
with new vibrant colors
that we never knew
I like how nature is like poetry
You never know what will come
from that seed
from that line
I like how nature is:
just itself.

Kelley Douglas, age 13
Lodi, California
Elkhorn Middle School (Stockton)

Sandstone Walk

Rough-hewn stones
beneath my feet,
how many stories
can you tell me
of wandering steps
that passed you by
and didn't stop
to wonder
at your pale, red
beauty.

Emily Fuller, age 18
Salt Lake City, Utah
Brighton High School
Teacher: Patricia Russell

Este es...

Este es una cascada que habla de música.
Este es un cascabel que suena como palomas.
Este es un reflejo que se mira en el agua.
Este es un sueño que me hace imaginar.
Este es un camino que nos ayuda cuando estamos perdido.
Este es una palabra que esta confundida.

Mehrnush Golriz, age 10
Berkeley, California
Cragmont School

Clouds

Clouds:
Wisps of dreams that float
Along the river of night's sleeping hours.
Or, clouds:
Puffs of thoughts that creep
Across the blue of an open mind.
Another, clouds:
Shells of creatures
That we watch without knowing.
Or, maybe
Just clouds.

Rosie Handschy, age 13
Boulder, Colorado
Casey Middle School

On Forgetting

It's easy to forget
the air
(so soft and hushed just floating there)
the moon
(quietly looming moving so slowly
you even don't notice
until it slips off in the morning)
the sky
(pinned up at night by little pricks of light)
the trees
(bent piously under the glorious weight
of it all)
the water
(slithering sinuously and gracefully
light tickling its back)
it's so easy to forget
until one night
you step out and
the moon is a giant circle
punched out of paper by a Four-year old
bold and grinning
the trees reach and sing hallelujah
skies soar up
and the air is so still
that you can almost see
the little breezes that butterfly-kiss your cheek.
for a moment the splendor
is crushing.

Catherine Killingsworth, age 18
Atlanta, Georgia
Chamblee Charter High School (Chamblee)

El Arbol de Juanito

Ayer visitamos el árbol de mi hermano.
Lo plantaron cuando murió.
Yo era bebé, el árbol también.
Me llegaba a la pansita.
Ahora es más alto de mi cabeza.
Ahora las hojas brillan
Rojas y anaranjadas.
Las hojas anaranjadas como mi pelo
Son de Juanito, diciéndome,
“Hola.”

Adriane Mariscal, age 7
South Lake Tahoe, California
Bijou Community School

Luna

The lights go out. A little shy,
She sticks her head out from her
Hiding place. Gaining more courage,
She shows herself in her shimmering
Fluorescent attire. Smiling she steps out
And dances across the black curtained
Stage of the Earth

Meaghan Snider, age 17
Sheridan, Oregon
Delphian School

Yo

Yo soy azul como el mar
Yo no soy miedosa a las arañas
Yo recuerdo la música que se llama amor
Me gustaría escribir un poema
No me gusta cuando el tiempo pasa
Yo tengo un lago que está lleno de paz
Yo no tengo un botón para prender la luz infinita
Yo veo sonrisas donde vayan pasando
Yo nunca he visto una mariposa con una vida en sus alas

Hellen Velasquez, age 10
San Pablo, California
E.M. Downer Elementary School

Tick Tock

One drop of water
Tumbles to the ground.
One snowflake flutters
Around, around.
One well for a wish
And a small child's coin.
One river of words
That flows in my mind.
One glacier that carves
Its name in a rock.
One hour hand
On mother earth's clock

Dillon York, age 13
(2003 Finalist)
Woodside, California
Woodside School

Whispering Snow

The snow fall upon a whisper tree
and drops like ice into my mouth.
It falls like a peaceful sign,
a sunrise from heaven,
tumbling out from the air we breathe.
My mind thinks of snowbirds flying everywhere.
Is the world at a point that is dangerous?
Feel the glory of the heavens.
Feel the moonstones falling from the sky.
The future is like happiness beside me.

Kaila Ontiveraos, Age 8
Durham Elementary School
Durham, California
Teacher: Rebecca Ginney

Buckets of Rain

I would like to swim in Lake Allatoona,
But it looks a little dry.
I will catch the raindrops in a bucket
As they fall down from the sky.

When my bucket gets full I will go to the lake
And pour the water in.
How many buckets will it take?
We'll see when the fish start to grin.

Travis Baker, Age 7
Lewis Elementary School
Kennesaw, Georgia