A Celebration of POETRY

32nd Annual Poetry Contest

Award-winning poetry from students in York and Adams County

York County Libraries
Where your story begins
The Youth Services Staff of York County Libraries is proud to present the compilation of poetry from our 32nd Annual Poetry Contest. The intrinsic value of the event is evidenced by the continued support of local educators. We received 200 entries this year, many submitted by school librarians and teachers on behalf of their students. We thank them for encouraging the young poets of York and Adams County.

Our panel of judges generously devoted time and expertise to ensuring that a quality pool of winners was selected. We thank them for their continued support of this program.

Each winner receives a copy of this book of poems. The book will also be distributed to the school libraries of each of the winners and all York and Adams County Libraries.

York County Libraries thanks all those who submitted entries to the competition and we hope that York and Adams County students will continue to find self-expression and satisfaction in their creative efforts.

Congratulations to all our winners!
My Guinea Pig
By Rose Delp
First Grade, Homeschool

Squirmy, squeaky, fluffy, cute
Eating stems, leaves and roots
A fuzzy, silky, curly wig
It’s my sweet little guinea pig.
Once Upon a Time

By Estella Hamilton
Second Grade, Yorkshire Elementary

Once upon a time
I had a rhyme
Of a cat
Who sat in a hat
This cat was funny
And had a friend bunny
Together they share a banana with hair
And they go to the fair.
Cheesy Potatoes
By Annecy Georgi
Second Grade, Homeschool

Lumpy,
Made by my mom.
Makes my mouth water,
Taste delicious,
Soft, not the tiniest bit chewy.
Yummy cheese sauce over
Peeled sliced potatoes.
I could eat them every day,
With a fork or spoon.
The Snow
By Henry Garber
First Grade, Stony Brook Elementary

Snow is cold,
Snow is nice,
Snow is cold
In between your toes!
Everything dies,  
It’s a part of life.  
Like that tree that just got chopped by a knife.

What if the bird drops  
Its prey with its feet?  
A vulture will circle, then fly down to eat.

If you just wait here,  
And let me explain.  
You might get the gist of this sort of thing.

Predators and prey,  
They all go together.  
If you think about it, they are birds of a feather.

There’s a dead leaf  
That fell to the ground.  
Leaving food for a worm, or a composting mound.

When something dies,  
It makes something else grow.  
So that is very important, you know.

Composting’s good,  
As you can see.  
It makes more dirt for a little oak tree.

Without dying things  
We’d have nothing else new.  
It’s just the cycle of life, it’s true.

Like that one little rodent,  
That got eaten by a bird.  
But that bird was just trying to eat, you’ve heard.
Music and Me
By Isabel Capella
Fourth Grade, Southern Elementary School

They say music makes you happy
and I think it must be so.
Because when I hear music,
something happens in my toes.

When the song comes to an end
I feel a little sad.
But when the next song starts
I’m back to feeling glad.

My legs start to wiggle,
Then I start to snap the beat.
My head starts bobbing
And I go wild in my seat.

Music really does make you happy,
what they say is true.
If the world had no music,
I don’t know what we’d do.

I can’t seem to help it,
something happens to my mouth.
My body starts singing,
I just have to let it out.
Tiny
By Sol Williams
Fourth Grade, Homeschool

My tiny dog can be very cute
But sometimes I want to put him on mute.
He likes to yip and yip all day
And when it’s time for dinner
He goes “Yip! Yip! Hooray!”
Lazy Daisy, What Do You Dream?
By Ruby Delp
Third Grade, Homeschool

Lazy Daisy, my silly cat. This must bring you lots of joy.
How you love to sleep on the mat! Lazy Daisy, do you play
Your mind is full of fun it seems, in your mind as you doze all day?
when you have your kitty dreams. Dreaming and peaceful on your seat.
Do you think you’re watching koi? Lazy Daisy, you are so sweet.
A Tiny Seed
By Paige Overmiller
Sixth Grade, York Suburban Middle School

A tiny seed is planted
In the depths of the deep dark soil
A new life has begun
The seed pushes its way
Through the moist soil
Until it reaches the light;
Until it can breathe
The world changes
Water droplets fall
The sky darkens
Thunder booms overhead
But the little plant keeps growing
Desperate to reach the sky

As the water vanishes
And the sun comes out
A promising rainbow
Reflected by sunlight
Hangs bright in the sky
Like thousands of little butterflies
The little plant opens its leaves
And smiles in the sun
It’s destined to shine;
Shine like the sun
Destined to make its own one day
And begin new life
Winter Wonder
By Ellis Alas
Sixth Grade, St. Joseph Elementary

I hear her soft meow
I follow the light paw prints
She's nestled in white
I once found a land much different from ours;  
Vibrant and beautiful and filled with flowers.  
How I arrived there, I’m really not sure,  
I don’t know if it was through a portal, or  
perhaps a door.  
All I knew was that I never wanted to leave,  
But who would, with all the marvelous things  
to see?  
Crystal clear rivers that sparkled in the sun,  
I knew I’d miss this magical place once my  
visit was done.  
What with all the birds, singing so loud,  
Nothing alive could match their astonishing  
sound.  
And then there were the trees, colored  
various shades,  
Pinks, purples, blues, greens, I never wanted  
it to fade.  

I wanted to stay forever in this magical world,  
But I couldn’t, for I was only a girl.  
I could never live up to the beauty found  
here,  
With its spectacular sights and sounds always  
so near.  
Nothing could ever compare to this place,  
No scenery, no landmark, it was a fact I had  
to face.  
Never again would I see this, so I took it all in,  
And suddenly, I was back home,  
remembering where I’d been.  
But I now knew I was alright here, in my own  
magical world,  
And I would stay there, for I was only a girl.
Fun Fish Feeding Time
By Sam Wilt
Sixth Grade, Homeschool

Blub blub blub
as the stripy fish swim through my gigantic aquarium
I open up the lid to put a pinch of fish food in.
I watch them speedily dart to gulp
the tiny colorful pieces of food into their stomachs.
The brightly colored fish blow bubbles as they swallow the food.
They use their agile fins to swim away fast
and quietly hide in the coral.
They peek out and watch me walk away. Once
I’m gone they emerge and happily swim
around the tall green plants.
Blub blub blub
Whither art thee, o wonderful booketh?
I has’t did look f’r thee f’r longer than you couldst imagine.
I am hast lost without thee,
O admirable booketh.
Thou art absolute, and thither is nay other like thee.
I long to engult thy pages
As a predat’r engults its prey.
Nevertheless, I shalt not giveth up mine own sore search f’r thee,
And I shalt cometh back triumphant.
Swim Fast
By Owen Soffer
Seventh Grade, Central York Middle School

Put on your cap and swim fast.
Put on your goggles and don’t get last.

Win the race.
But set a good pace.

The crowd chants to swim fast.
I do not want to get last.
Go Fast, Go Fast, Go Fast.
Beep! Goes the starting buzzer.

I dive into the cool pool.
I don’t want to look like a fool.
I am swimming so fast.
I do not want to get last.

Splash!
Dash!
Go very fast!

No, I won’t lose!
No, I don’t lose!
No, I won’t go down without a bruise!

Coaches cheer.
Teammates tear.
I will whip as fast as the wind.
So that everyone will have grinned.

I swam fast.
I did not get last.
I got first.
I am about to burst.

I set my pace.
I had a good race.
I did my best.
So now I rest.

second PLACE
7th & 8th Grade
The Snow
By Olivia Craven
Eighth Grade, Central York Middle School

Schools out
Not a soul to be found on the evening
Of the blizzard
The street roads as white as
A sheet of paper
My glass window is ice,
So cold.
“Oooooohoooh” the wind seems
To say as it rips through
The little forgotten town
The small little Christmas
Lights shine
through the thick snow
All the little kids dancing around
Are ants compared to
The snow but they don’t care
I do
The clouds seem to scream snow
As if it will never stop
But as it falls the thought of
Help seems to fade
Everything getting covered
By a lock never to be
Opened
Ever.
Winter Illusion
By Keona Jourdan
Seventh Grade, South Eastern Middle School

My hands were brutally shaking,
My lips were viciously quaking.
I was trembling in the snow,
And it seemed no one would ever know.

I didn’t even have one mitten,
And I was violently being bitten.
The evening was going by so slow,
And it seemed no one would ever know.

Then suddenly I thought I’d lost my sight,
Because there was only light and no more white.
The snowflakes were like a million mites,
And I was no longer tucked in tight.

I had no delicious banquet,
And no more cozy blanket.
The lady was gone and I was still in the snow,
And it seemed no one would ever know.

But then I saw a familiar face appear,
The old lady was once again here.
I thought it was another wind illusion,
But her gentle touch took away my confusion.

The yellow room smelled of chocolate cakes,
And on the table I also saw two steaks.
Then the lady put on some brew,
And I was happy that someone knew.

This was actually real,
And overwhelming joy was all I could feel.
I was no longer alone and blue,
And this lady really knew.

She knew I was cold and sad,
And when she went to take me home,
I found that her hug was the warmest I’d ever had.
Incense
By Sophia Dotterweich
Tenth Grade, Spring Grove Area High School

Mid-afternoon
Summertime
The soft sighing of the rain
Just beginning
Tells me that it’s time to go upstairs, to my room
And let myself get lost in it
A gentle downpour is coming
I am aware that each moment that passes is
becoming a memory
So I sit and listen to the clouds
As they give back to the world

Then I remember
Incense in a blue box
That is covered in writing from a language I don’t
speak
From a country that is far from my bedroom
Gently, I take a cone from its wrapping
Inhaling the sweet, earthy scent
I set it in its stand
Golden and scorched
Patiently waiting
For me to give life to the flame
And when I do
As beautiful as it is,
I give it a few seconds to glow before I exhale
Ever so slightly
And it’s gone

And in an instant
The smoke appears
A thin stream
I don’t dare to move
Or breathe
Until I see the solid, silvery ribbons

Fill the air
Ascending
Graceful waves of smoke
Silent
They create a cloud that hangs around me
And I abandon everything to drink in their magic
Closing my eyes, then opening them again
A tapestry of smoke
Hangs against the grey of the sky outside my
window
I smile to myself, as smoke tumbles up and out
Burying itself deep into my hair and clothes
And I am mesmerized,
The smoke sealing me in a veil
And whispering lovely things in my ear,
Telling me how lucky I am
To be here
Right now

And all the while the rain still streams
Delicately, yet unfailingly
I can imagine the shock of the cold, wet drops
And the soft, shining light of gratitude
Grows deep inside me
Because I am inside
Enjoying the beauty of the rain
Without its clinging discomfort
And I know
That everything is connected
Me
My incense
The rain
And I am just so thankful
To be part of it all
The Irony in My Pain
By Summer Remmey
Tenth Grade, 21st Century Cyber Charter School

I think that the beauty of being in pain is the irony.

The deep red color of the word is really quite lovely.
It’s a fire with the soft waves of heat and a subdued flickering motion
without yellow and orange tones seen in your artificial fireplace, just red
dark, scarlet, beautiful blood-red silky swirls of color.

Irony

It’s one of the prettiest colored words I know.
I suppose that’s all subjective though, not everyone likes red.

Pain

It’s an ugly word.
It’s brown but almost-black dirt stained bricks.
It’s blood splatters on a muddy surface, the droplets barely standing out.
It’s physical, mental POUNDING in your body or your brain.

The two words come together when people like me put them there.
We find ourselves in pain so long that it becomes a part of us
and we start to doubt that we can be anything without it.

I thought I had healed and honestly I probably could’ve kept going
but some little part of me told me to go back and open up those wounds
because I would be nothing without them.
I told myself that without my pain, nobody would even look at me
nobody would talk to me
at least when I was hurt, they tried to fix me.

Irony

It’s ironic, don’t you think, that I could ease all this pain
and yet for some reason I choose not to?
As I grew older I began to understand,

home was a person, not a place.

So what was I supposed to do, when the

Only home I knew left.
Untitled
By Nathaniel Brown
Tenth Grade, West York High School

The wind was glissing in the air
With the quiet sound of the birds
The air was fair but never I never cared.
Where Else?
By Ryan Steinheimer
Eleventh Grade, Dover Area High School

Let me lie my lonely mind
Among lands maxed with lilacs
Lazily looming limbs
Moped, mopped across the mounds

Where else but dream land?

Fiends firing slots of shots at friends
Formerly family, finally fading to foes
Slinging on a sack of snacks on their backs
Stealing standing still, not so silently

Where else but the real world?

Happily hopping in heaven
Holding hands and healing the hurt with hope
Wounds washed away, without worry
We all wander the forever forest

Where else but dream land?

Car crashes and clashes of the masses
Madness, cold-cored corporate counselors
Controlling polite people, politicizing persistently
Please, I pray, for even a piece of peace

Where else but the real world?

Glistening golden gates glow
Going into the garden of good spirit
Red roses raising, daisies dancing
Life letting life live, lovely

Where else but dream land?

Souls stuck simultaneously between separate sides
Reality reaching roughly through the rabbit hole
Grabbing with grimy, greasy hands
Dream land desperately doing its best

Where else...can we go?
The Berries
By Mohammad Eisa
Eleventh Grade, Spring Grove Area High School

Sickening purple,
obviously poisonous.
I would not indulge in such things.
Obviously.

I’m not scared.
I just know.

Nauseating violet
with raw blood rashes.
Might as well be written, plainly.

I’m not hurt.
I am wary.

Empty black,
A cold sphere.
It’s watching me.
But I know.

I know its tricks.
I know the texture, and the panic.
And eventually, relief.

I knew it all.
Until you left,
And I forgot.

Royal Purple,
elegant and luxurious.
Why not?
Just this once.

Why was I afraid?
It’s delicious.

Perfect violet,
with plump red kisses.
Beautiful cursive
I could read for hours.

I’m invincible.
And it keeps growing taller.

Smooth black.
The perfect curve.
It adores me.
I revel in it.

I’m covered in a warm blanket.
I let it press me down.
It pushes me down until I start to sink.
And this time
I let it take me.
My childhood was spattered with a flurry of creme pages and crisp, inked words. They were my greatest playmates, the friends I held tight to my chest into the shadows of the night. I adored the fairytales, admired the ease of their narratives, how every piece—no matter how delicate, or how cruel, clicked into the perfect place by the time I finished the story. As years passed, fewer books landed in my grasp, but my love of narratives not once faltered. Then I became the author, with reality as my blank slate. Although my characters were often unaware of their surrounding plots, they were an author’s dream—the foolish antagonist; the comedic best friend; the emerging love interest. Yet, once each story reached its climax and trickled down with falling action, I closed the book and ended the tale in search of another book to fill my reader’s void.
A serpent brought us together
First, it was sweet
Like fresh picked honeycomb
Under the southern sun

With you, it felt right
I had found
Where I was meant to be
I had found
My true home

You used to hold me
As if I was an hallucination
That I would disappear
And never had existed at all

Slowly but surely
Your grip on me loosened
And yet I could still feel you
Even though you had left
And the honeycomb rotted on my tongue
December air is bleak and cold.  
Their blushing turns to being bold,  
So soon they both have hands to hold.  
They’re walking through a dream.

Hand in hand they grow their romance,  
A classic show of love’s first glance.  
And giving each many a chance.  
The honeymoon phase leads.

Up in clouds even closer now.  
Its glow still fades away somehow,  
But seems it’s falling anyhow.  
Too hard to let them go.

Was it something that they had said?  
We wish we knew each other’s heads,  
So all the feelings weren’t misled.  
Were we not meant to be?

Many words to be unspoken,  
Because of what we had chosen,  
And only one is heartbroken.  
What made it all go wrong?

Their happy dance floated away,  
Still hard to keep the thoughts at bay.  
All they wanted was them to stay.  
It’s just how life goes on.
Meet the 2021 Panel of Judges

LORI LECKRONE  Lori Leckrone, a children’s librarian, earned her B.S. in English from Liberty University and her MLS in Library Science from Clarion University. In addition to being a librarian, Lori has spent the last fourteen years homeschooling her children, reading many good books, and traveling to various parts of the globe.

JENNIFER NESBITT  Jennifer Nesbitt is associate professor of English at Penn State York and editor of The Space Between Journal. Her book about rum in literature will be published later this year by the University of Virginia Press. This spring she is teaching a survey of English literature where she gets to teach lots of poetry, and she is teaching her Introduction to the Caribbean class about poets like Louise Bennett and Derek Walcott. She has also written and lectured about the TV series Downton Abbey and the film Avatar. She likes running, tennis, and yoga; sews badly sometimes; and reads detective fiction, Jane Austen novels, and fantasy with great delight.

TED NESBITT  Ted Nesbitt is an intermittent student of English Literature and Modern Greek Language at McGill University. In spare time, Ted enjoys reading obscure zines, making flavored syrups, and taking walks in Nixon Park.

JJ SHEFFER  JJ Sheffer is director of enroot, a portfolio of arts and humanities programs that use storytelling to help participants cultivate a sense of community. enroot programs include York: Crafted, a series of events featuring brief lectures on what it means to be a craftsman in York, PA; York Story Slam, an open mic storytelling series; and Kable House Presents, an independent concert series hosted in York’s historic Central Market. (Learn more at enrootyork.org.) Many years ago, she studied English/Professional Writing at Kutztown University, where she was an editor of the campus newspaper, and completed her undergraduate studies at Penn State University, where she served as an editor of the campus literary magazine. She currently serves on the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and the steering committee for the Women’s Giving Circle of York County Community Foundation. Ms. Sheffer has written poetry her whole life, and is particularly fond of sonnets and haiku.

CAROL CLARK WILLIAMS  Carol Clark Williams is poet laureate emerita of York, Pennsylvania, and founder of the poetry tent for the Yorkfest outdoor arts festival. Carol’s poems have been published in print and online journals including Fledgling Rag, Broadkill River Review, Mad Poets Review, Margie, Byline, PPS Prize Poems, Encore, and Welcome to the Resistance. In 2017, she received the Above and Beyond award from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies for her work with young people.

THE REV. CARLA CHRISTOPHER WILSON  The Rev. Carla Christopher Wilson was the 4th Poet Laureate of York from 2011 - 2013 and served as the 2014 Arts and Cultural Community Liaison to the Mayor’s Office for the City of York. A multiply published and award-winning poet, she is also a diversity and cultural competency trainer and consultant, public speaker, and a renewal pastor with the ELCA, the largest Lutheran denomination in America.